

COMMONWEAL

**A Republic of
Couch Potatoes**
WILSON CAREY
McWILLIAMS

St. Charles Seminary Library
Carthage, Ohio

RELIGIOUS BOOKS

Virginia Sloyan
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William Griffin
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Stephen Happel
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Christopher J. Kauffman

A Leap in the Light

WILLIAM J. O'MALLEY

ABIGAIL McCARTHY
on Eric
JANE REDMONT
on Barbara Harris
DAVID CARLIN
on John Tower

The Editors on
SALMAN RUSHDIE

CORRESPONDENCE

Striking Fox

Issaquah, Wash.

To the Editors: Were you testing your readers when you published John Garvey's little throwaway piece on Matthew Fox in the November 18 issue? I admit the piece was strikingly written, and I laughed at its cleverness, but it is not wise to mock your subscribers, to kick your friends in the shins. The appropriate thing for you to have done is send it back to Garvey and say: "You must want to send this on to the *Wanderer*."

I've been reading and taking delight in *Commonweal* for thirty-four years and I don't remember a dilemma quite like this. Your indiscretion in publishing Garvey's scornful, unsubstantiated attack, so out of character with *Commonweal*'s style, undoubtedly happened because of ignorance of Fox's widely taught, lifetime work. If your silence continues in regard to Fox's work, I will have to conclude you prefer lying in bed with Ratzinger and his ilk.

GERARD JANCOSKI

The editors reply:

We were not testing our readers, mocking them, or—distance permitting—even kicking them in the shins. We simply trust in their ability to evaluate the necessarily brief and occasionally pointed observations of our columnists.

To reassure Mr. Jancoski, we do not believe that Matthew Fox should be silenced, a point John Garvey made. We also do not believe that John Garvey should be silenced.

Apart from the issue of silencing, the editors have as yet no fixed collective opinion on the merit of Fox's work. It does appear that the valuable theological correctives he offers are not unmingled with many troubling and trendy claims. We hope that John Garvey's will not be the last word on this matter.

Meanwhile, even at the risk of being lumped "with Ratzinger and his ilk," we

reject any suggestion that we must automatically praise or exempt from criticism every theologian whom the cardinal censures. We cannot believe that Mr. Jancoski has been delighting in *Commonweal* for thirty-four years without noticing that its stubborn independence extends in more than one direction.

THE EDITORS

Respectful Campbell

Hamden, Conn.

To the Editors: I am writing in regard to John Garvey's "Faithful Conflict: Rejecting Campbell's Soup" [December 16, 1988]. In one of his more playful moments, Joseph Campbell used the metaphor of computer software to describe the functions of individual religions. Each religion, he said, could be likened to a distinct software, with its own set of signals that "work" for the



user. The goal of all this software is to get at the Mystery of Being, each in its own limited way. But, he cautions, "If a person is really involved in a religion, he better stay with the software he has got. But a chap like myself, who likes to play with the software—well, I can run around, *but I probably will never have an experience comparable to that of a saint.*"

I find this software metaphor helpful in my struggle to hold to my Catholic faith and at the same time be open to the truths of other religions. I also find Campbell's caution about "running around" to be deeply respectful of the power of commitment to one system. This software metaphor is also humbling. It admits the possibility of other systems working for

other people. It suggests that the Mystery we all seek may just be bigger than all of us.

Garvey almost says that himself when he asserts, "Truth finally cannot be said completely, and words point beyond themselves." But he insists upon the existence of "irreconcilable differences between some of the great religious traditions," and asserts that "our differences matter greatly, perhaps even more than our similarities." Religious wars, raging even today, would bear out the sad truth of Garvey's statements. Could he not allow for a Jewish software and a Buddhist software, each with its own signals, each reading the Mystery somewhat differently? Could he not summon reverence for the possibility that somewhere, out of reach now of all our softwares, there may be a meeting point, a reconciliation of opposites? *Must one religion*

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Commonweal welcomes letters on subjects treated in its pages. Letters should not exceed 250 words and are subject to editing for clarity and space limitations.

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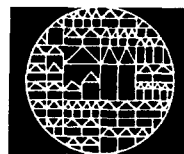
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Advertising Manager: Ruth E. Taylor
Publisher: Edward S. Skillin

The editors are always glad to consider any material for publication, but may we again remind readers that unsolicited manuscripts should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. We regret that we cannot otherwise return such material.

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COMMONWEAL



War of the words

Make no mistake about it, God has been blasphemed in the Salman Rushdie affair, and the Ayatollah Khomeini has done it.

It is not for us to decide whether Islam, its Prophet, and its Holy Book have also been blasphemed, by either the ayatollah or Mr. Rushdie or both. Many Muslim leaders have distanced themselves from the ayatollah's issuance of a license to murder in God's name. Some have emphasized that mercy, compassion, tolerance, justice, and patience are basic to Islam, but it is not clear from what they have said whether, in their view, the ayatollah's actions derive from a tenable alternative interpretation or constitute an offense against Islam at least as grave as anything Mr. Rushdie has done.

As for Mr. Rushdie, although his insistence that he meant no disrespect by his novel seems more than a bit disingenuous, he has certainly been candid about his overall enterprise. In the March 2 *New York Review of Books*, he wrote that, left by his loss of faith with a "God-shaped hole," he has filled it with literature: "So the battle over *The Satanic Verses* is a clash of faiths....As my fictional character 'Salman' says of my fictional prophet 'Mahound,' 'It's his Word against mine.'"

In this War of the Words, Mr. Rushdie has sided not just with literature but with a certain kind of modern Western literature, a literature of imaginative rebellion. There exists a strange embrace between this literature of purposeful transgression and what it transgresses. As G.K. Chesterton put it, writing in 1905, "Blasphemy depends upon belief. If anyone doubts this, let him sit down seriously and try to think of blasphemous thoughts about Thor." Rushdie's own honest recognition that he has enlisted in a religious war helps explain why some of the testimonials offered by other writers in response to the ayatollah's anathema had such a strongly religious, dare one say dogmatic, tone. Passionate rebellion not only requires an object but needs an alternative. Thus, it is a faith these authors profess, and one not without paradoxes.

But whatever inner tensions it may reveal, this literary faith is one which the West has been living with since at least the Enlightenment. The ethic it has engendered is no doubt imperfect and is imperfectly observed, but it has conferred benefits: Writers like Mr. Rushdie are wont, we know, to play with fire, but we do not respond by burning them alive. The War of Words must be waged with words.

This development is a considerable boon to writers, of course. But it is equally important to believers. When one of the world's most important religious leaders declares that even if Mr. Rushdie turned himself into "the most pious man of all time," true belief demands that all Muslims still "send him to hell," that leader is saying something about God as awful as anything Mr. Rushdie hints about Mohammed.

Christianity did not easily give up its own self-endowed mission to pass judgment

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on infidels, or the burning and hanging that went with it. It gave them up under the pressure of self-destructive religious wars, spreading skepticism, and its own internal critics. There should be no boasting about this process, too slow, too reluctant, too smeared with blood, including the blood of Muslims. But there should be no hesitation in asserting its central and permanent value now that the process has occurred. Cheap shots are made about the Enlightenment, about secularism, about the modern world's supposed incapacity for belief or its insensitivity to the sacred. Like most caricatures, they are based on a germ of truth. But is our creed diminished because we reserve the term blasphemy for such things as a resurgence of the "teaching of contempt"—the long history of Christian anti-Semitism? Is our belief eroded when we counter with criticism or even ignore the artistic transgressions against our faith, sometimes seriously and thoughtfully meant, sometimes merely exploitative or adolescent? Or have we instead learned that believers are more in need of self-examination than God is of defense?

How, when, and in what ways will Islam come to lessons like these? It is impossible to say. Islam is a great religion of 900 million adherents, claiming scores of nations. We must find a way to understand it and live with it, as it is now, and not as Christians or the West would prefer to redefine it. But we need to be frank about its weaknesses just as we need to gain from its strengths. Mainly we need to be clear about our own weaknesses and strengths. The ayatollah reminds us what that old-time religion really could be. He helps us see again that running the risk—and it is a risk—of free inquiry and free artistic expression is every bit worth it.

LECTURING (SIGH!) THE LAITY

It is more than thirty years since Yves Congar wrote *Lay People in the Church*. Modestly subtitled "A Study for a Theology of the Laity," his volume was the first comprehensive effort to understand and define theologically what he described as a new Pentecost: "If the church, secure on her foundations, boldly throws herself open to lay activity, she will experience such a springtime as we cannot imagine."

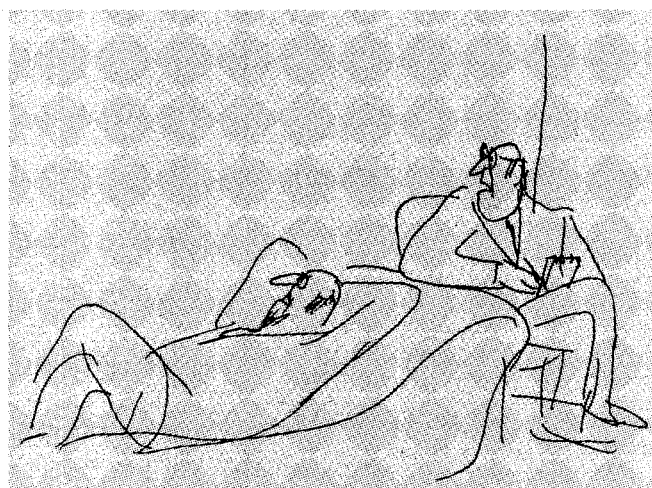
Is it possible that Congar's work will prove the high point in the effort to devise a serious theology of the laity? The laity have come to play an unanticipated and growing role in the work of the church itself—with more to come because of the increasing shortage of priests and sisters. This turn of events and the resulting preoccupation with "lay ministry" have drawn attention and resources away from sufficiently imagining the work of the laity in secular affairs. Thirty years after Congar and twenty-three years after Vatican II's *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*, we now have *Christifideles laici*, the post-synod report from the 1987 synod, "The Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and the

World," under the byline of John Paul II. With this document in hand, we still have no adequate theological framework for understanding the work of lay people in either church or world.

The 1987 synod, with its prior worldwide consultation of lay people, was convoked to review the state of the laity since Vatican II. In many parts of the world the consultations were in themselves animating events. In parishes as well as in regional and national gatherings, lay people got the chance to exchange ideas with one another and with clergy and bishops. Not being invited themselves, what did the laity ask to bishops to discuss in Rome? Lay ministry—work in the world and/or work in the church. Women in non-ordained ministries, including altar girls. Human sexuality from the perspective of married couples. Improving collaboration with clergy. More fully linking faith and life. A hunger for community and spiritual development. The U.S. Bishops' Committee on the Laity estimates that in this country some 200,000 Catholics participated in the consultations; in addition the committee organized seven national meetings between lay leaders and the bishop-delegates to the synod.

If heart can be taken from these efforts of the local churches, it should be, for none can be taken from Rome. First, there was an unfortunate pre-synodal "Working Paper," which supposedly drew upon the bishops' consultations (we don't really know that since the Vatican put the lid on the bishops' conference reports), and was meant to guide their discussions at the synod. Then, there was the truncated and censored summary of the synod discussion groups. Now, we have the just-released *Christifideles laici*. And what does it all add up to? Well, when the ordinary layperson "in the world" encounters this sort of thing from business or government, she has a term for it—bureaucratic claptrap.

Many questions from the faithful, few and evasive answers from the Pontifical Council on the Laity, underscore the church's want of a substantive theology of the laity. In any other church but our own, that would reflect badly on the laity themselves, who share in the responsibility for theological reflection. But in the case of the Roman Catholic church the blame for failure lies squarely with those who insist on com-



"If you're God, what does that make me?"

SIDNEY CALLAHAN the noted writer and lecturer, will succeed the late Kathleen Casey Craig as president of the *Commonweal* Associates—the friends of *Commonweal* whose loyal support enables the magazine to continue publication. Professor Callahan teaches psychology at Mercy College, Dobbs Ferry, New York. Her many books include: *The Illusion of Eve*, *Parenting*, and *With All My Heart and Mind* (Crossroads), a 1989 Christopher Award winner.

plete control, so much so that the honest efforts of the bishops initially to consult the laity, the willingness of the laity to speak up, and even the work of the synod itself have been lost, first in bureaucratic maneuvering that limited input and output, and now, more than a year later, in a sea of torpid prose.

The authors have made sure that almost no one—lay or clerical—will read these 40,000 words; when the document is not inching in one direction or the other on internal church questions, it throws in long quotes from other documents (the luminescent phrases of *Lumen gentium* shine forth in this numbing context). Its bare-bones references to the issues raised by the bishops are found scattered throughout in allusions to the struggles between bishops and unnamed lay movements for setting and maintaining diocesan priorities; references to previously unknown commissions that will settle the question of lectors and acolytes and that will designate authentic Catholic lay movements; and a welcome declaration that parishes are the basic locus of church life. The role of the bishop as the leader of the local church is emphasized, but crucially hedged: "The church is a primary teacher, in which the pope takes the 'primary' role in the formation of the lay faithful. As successor of Saint Peter, he has the ministry of 'confirming his brothers in the faith'.... Therefore, not simply the words coming directly from him, but also *those transmitted by the various departments of the Holy See* [emphasis added] call for a loving and receptive hearing by the lay faithful." (In Scripture and tradition there is solid grounding for the leadership role of the bishops, and for the priesthood of the faithful; where is the theological warrant for endowing curial officials with the mantle of Petrine authority?)

"Loving and receptive hearing" is a one-way process where the Vatican is concerned. And that is the heart of the matter: Until we develop and learn to live by an ecclesiology congruent with Vatican II and until the Vatican is able to set aside the overweening defensiveness of its own authority—only a portion of which is authentically Petrine—the laity along with the rest of the church will be in the intolerable position of having their own concerns and queries shunted aside while being given answers to questions they did not ask.

We are not sure what a fully developed theology of the laity would look like. We now know there must be better ways of searching it out than the synodal process. One alternative model is our own bishops' patient, critical, and alert listening on economics, on war and peace, on women, and on the laity. Certainly there are others: national and international task

forces of bishops, theologians, and lay people systematically looking at and reflecting on the theological lacunae apparent in the "ministry" issue; forums of lay people reporting on their experiences as Christians in church and world and reflecting on the theological and spiritual consequences. We need real consultation, honest discussion, serious theology, and recognition that care and concern for the church exist at the bottom as well as the top.

When Congar wrote in the fifties the question of the laity seemed almost an exotic interest, even to many lay people. Thirty years later, with the issues barely advanced beyond Congar's treatment, the laity, though critical to the future of the church, remain peripheral to its theological self-understanding and to its decision making. Early in the next century the church will flourish or wither depending not only on how vigorously laity have come to understand and take up their responsibilities as Christians, but on how prudently Vatican officials understand and exercise theirs. If we are now working in the dark, it's because someone keeps dimming the lights.

END THE FAMINE END THE WAR

There is famine in Sudan, as bad as Ethiopia's four years ago. This famine, in the midst of good rains and a promised full harvest, continues because food itself has become a weapon of war between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM). One million people have died since 1983; three million have been displaced from southern Sudan. Both government and the guerrillas have blocked food supplies. Even more than relief efforts, the Sudanese people need international support for peace negotiations. Oxfam, America has asked for prayers for the Sudanese people on Sunday, March 12, and for letters to George Bush urging U.S. support for nascent peace efforts.

CONSECRATION IN BOSTON

WHEN THE SPIRIT LEADS

BARBARA HARRIS, BISHOP

A day or two before the consecration of Barbara Clementine Harris as suffragan bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, Cardinal Bernard Law and Greek Orthodox Bishop Methodios issue written statements of welcome. The statements are cordial. They also speak of the danger Harris's consecration presents for reconciliation among Christian churches, or what has become commonly known as "Christian unity."

At the consecration, the gospel music of St. Paul's African Methodist Episcopal Church choir alternates with the delicate melodies of the Chinese congregation and classical European harmonies of Trinity Church choir. The stately cadence of the Book of Common Prayer moves us forward, but in the musical realm there is a preferential option in the air: clearly, the day belongs less to Mozart and more to the music of the black church. The celebration flows. This is no Tower of Babel: we all hear God speaking in our own tongue.

As Barbara Harris walks down the center aisle, a tiny woman whose voice and presence can fill a cathedral, over 8000 people burst into applause. ("Not very characteristic of the Episcopal church," says one member of the congregation, Mary Shannon.) Throngs of priests, row upon row of beaming women and men, process down the side aisles of Boston's Hynes Auditorium. Barbara Clementine Harris, a woman and a priest of African descent, is consecrated a bishop by the laying on of hands, according to the tradition of the apostles, by fifty-five men, most of them white. All through the celebration, the bishops have been purposeful, solemn, and excited, with the calm certainty that God, through them, is doing a good thing.

In describing the celebration, those who were there speak of unity. Mary Shannon repeatedly uses the term "body" to speak of the church and of her experience of this day—"finally being part of the body...." "...all of us together in one body." She is wearing a locket with a picture of her eighty-year-old mother, a member of St. Andrew's Parish in Seattle, who "still carries her white gloves with her in church yet has rolled with the changes." She speaks in the plural: her mother, her daughters, her husband, her women friends, all rush into the conversation. "I cried," she says. "I just felt so happy for all of us."

Modene Dawson of Philadelphia speaks of another unity. For her, as for many African-Americans in the assembly, the significance of the event extends beyond the church. "It's beautiful for the country," she says. "It shows racial harmony." The church which conducts this celebration is not apart from the world; it is the body which proclaims to the world that God is alive in history.

Paul Matthews Washington, in his sermon, speaks about God and history. Harris's friend and mentor, he is rector emeritus of the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia, which feeds, clothes, and sanctifies the poorest of the city. In this church was held the first ordination of Episcopal women to the priesthood, in the summer of 1974, less than fifteen years ago. Harris, a member of the church, led the procession, carrying the cross.

"We cannot," says Washington, "overlook the fact that this woman being consecrated today is not just an American woman. She is a *black* woman who has had to struggle; she's been despised, she's been rejected....God has lifted up one who was at the bottom of society and has exalted her to be one of his chief pastors."

Washington speaks of Harriet Tubman, who "nineteen times went back into the land of bondage," thanking God for

her freedom by helping to free others. He speaks of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was raised from her lowly estate and sang of God's power to raise up the humble and put down the mighty from their thrones: "Mary," he says after quoting the Magnificat, "was an oppressed woman. That's how Holy Mary Mother of God felt!" He weeps as he recalls the slavery and oppression of black people in this country. "Only in understanding the past can we fully appreciate God's action in this event," he says.

The Episcopal church, a church of power and privilege, has chosen "a have-not," says Washington, but also one who "burns when others are offended," a "disturbing prophet." Harris has for years—in her public relations and policy work in the corporate world, in her parish, in her work with the Episcopal Church Publishing Company, in her pastoral ministry—advocated racial and economic justice, taken up the cause of women, spoken out against homophobia; she has, says Washington, devoted enough time to prison chaplaincy "to serve a two-year sentence herself."

The Right Reverend Barbara Harris, newly robed in bright vestments with Ashanti designs and symbols, presides at her first Eucharist as bishop. Among the concelebrants are Carter Heyward, one of the "Philadelphia Eleven" ordained at the Church of the Advocate, and Florence Tim-Oi Li, the first woman ordained a priest in the Anglican communion, in Hong Kong, one generation ago. At the distribution of Communion, Harris slips over to the far side of the auditorium and gives Communion to the people in the hearing-impaired section, who have been signing with their hands for three hours.

A bishop is, among other things, a maker of unity. Barbara Harris has already begun to make unity; but not in the ways in which unity was previously understood or structured. Her brother bishops, Law and Methodios, fear for the health and welfare of Christian unity. But where are the real rifts in our lives today? And when we say "unity," what do we mean?



Whose unity, which unity, and at what cost?

The deeper chasm today is not between Protestants and Catholics, or Greek Orthodox and Episcopalians. It is, much more, between haves and have-nots, between blacks and whites, between men and women, between the Northern and Southern hemispheres. These rifts are the wounds in need of healing, in church and in society. As for denominationalism, it is no longer the principal intrachurch split. Far deeper is the gap within each of our faith communities between fundamentalists and nonfundamentalists.

Early in the service, the presiding bishop, Edmond L. Browning, asks if anyone knows of any reason why the consecration ought not to proceed. Two men come to the microphone. The first calls the consecration "a sacrilegious imposture," the second "an impediment to the realization of the visible unity of the church for which Christ prayed." There will be a problem, they argue, with the validity of any sacrament celebrated by Harris.

Bernardine Hayes, a computer systems analyst and self-described "dormant Catholic" and veteran civil rights and peace activist (she is currently Vice-President of WAND, Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament), had never before today "seen a woman offer the sacraments. She is so clearly affiliated with the poor," Hayes adds. "She strikes me as a true minister." Hayes feels something stir within her during

the liturgy—"the realization that the piece of my life which is missing is the spiritual piece."

This was, she says, "like a Pentecost."

Whose unity?

The intervention of the dissenters highlights the lack of unanimity in the church about the consecration (although Browning is quick to point out, at the postconsecration press conference, that the overwhelming majority of Episcopalians support it). But it is, in its way, a step on the road to greater unity. Perhaps the two men will change their minds; perhaps never. What is hopeful and healthy and makes a body strong is that their pain was not swept under the rug. However token, this part of the ceremony honors difference; and the unity of the Episcopal church around this celebration—the unity behind the liturgy—is not the easy unity of unreflecting liberals. It has been hard won, tempered by prayer and struggle, and forged through the participatory process of decision making in the Episcopal church.

Christians do still need to speak with one another about Eucharist and ministry, about theological thought and ecclesial practice. But as Barbara Harris's consecration shows, the context of this discussion has been enlarged, and so have the discussion questions themselves.

JANE REDMONT

Jane Redmont, a Boston-based writer, is presently working on a book on Catholic women in the United States.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

ONE OF THE FAMILY

ERIC THE UNFORGETTABLE

His papers read Aran of Innisfallen or something equally impressive, but we decided at once that "Aran!" shouted from the doorstep would be mistaken for "Erin," which sounded too feminine for an outsize boxer. So we called him Eric, a masculine name and suitable for the dog of a family with Minnesota roots.

Eric has been much in my mind of late because of the ever-increasing interest in the relationship between animals and human beings. Newspapers and periodicals are full of articles on the way we share the planet. The subjects range from the health-giving aspects of pets for the elderly to the serious speculations of scientists now willing to admit that there

may be individuated personality even in the lower species of mammals.

Certainly there are mysteries in the history of man and animal; the development of friendship between dog and man is one of these.

Eric shared our lives for almost seventy dog years—a very long life for a dog of his breed. And there was no doubt that his was a unique animal personality if ever there was one. Even today, more than a dozen years after his death, old friends reminisce with us about him in such a way that newcomers to the group assume that he was another child or a close relative.

He joined the family after we had had rather casual relationships with a series of dogs who came and went—a beagle, a

springer, a Weimaraner. Only a puppy then, Eric was meant to replace the Weimaraner in the affections of the family's youngest. No amount of training or gentling had been able to wean that dog from his attack instincts. After he had treed the grocery man (on the kitchen countertop), torn the cleaning man's slacks, and destroyed the Welcome Lady's purse, we had to exile him to a friend's farm. Nevertheless, his going was mourned by the ten-year-old. So, rather than hers alone, Eric became everyone's dog.

Not that Eric cared or noticed. From the beginning it was apparent that he thought of himself as another member of the family. He bestowed his affection on us all and perceived others as our friends. We returned it and our friends got used to his drooling attention (boxers *do* drool).

For most of his life Eric had no interest in other dogs. He ignored them or attacked them as intruders if they came into his territory—once launching himself through the screen door to chase a lofty pair of high-bred setters being walked by. When one family member brought a cat home from college, the cat had to be

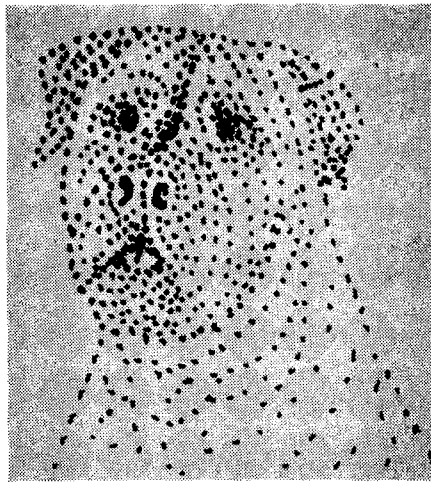
fed and sheltered in a closed room to be safe from him. Other animals were not to be tolerated.

Obedience school had little effect on Eric. To heel on order, or to stay, was simply beneath his dignity. He adopted certain rules of behavior that he evidently thought appropriate to his place in the family: coming when called, submitting to a leash in order to walk with us, reluctantly staying behind when it became clear that his company was not wanted.

Eric would not demean himself by learning tricks, although he was willing to please within limits. He would chase a ball or fetch a thrown stick, but he let us know when he was bored. In his youth he found his own amusements. He took over a skate board, for example, as his personal toy. He would worry it, shake it furiously, launch it down the driveway, and hurl himself after it in barking chase, catch it, trot back to his base triumphantly and begin again. When that was destroyed, we got another, and then another, until suddenly he decided he was too mature for that kind of play.

In maturity he was exquisitely tuned to family feelings. He shocked and terrified us one time by throwing himself at the throat of a horse on which our youngest was mounted. It was years later that she admitted to being afraid of that horse. He was affected when there was sadness in the family—so much so that he one time fell against the wall and slid down into a semi-stupor. The veterinarian diagnosed acute depression and prescribed tranquilizers. Eric also reacted—possibly to a tone in the voice—when any one of us mentioned unfriendly adversaries. He emitted throaty growls and little snapping barks. But he hated it when anyone tried to make him demonstrate this for outsiders; that was turning his show of sympathy into a trick and assaulting his place as a family member.

In his later years Eric began to change. Perhaps he was affected by the impermanence of human relationships as, one by one, the young went off to college; perhaps it was a canine mid-life crisis in which he decided that he had missed some things in life. At any rate, he, who had never tolerated another dog, welcomed a neighbor's half-mongrel, half-



hound, into our yard on Cape Cod. He waited each morning for his new friend to vault our picket fence. They would race and tumble about until one or the other tired and Eric came back for food and rest.

Then he adopted a kitten, a present from our caretaker. Instead of trying to kill it, he pawed at it gently, then picked

it up by the head and carried it into the living room and lay down with it before the fireplace. The kitten, willing to play, would feint escape and Eric would bring it back tenderly until they both fell asleep, the kitten between Eric's big paws.

The two friendships lasted all summer. The next year, although Eric looked for them, both dog and kitten were gone. His belated springtime was over. He began to lapse into old age. He remained affectionate but, like a human being at the same time of life, he became more insistent about his needs, beset with ills, in need of care, and, at the last, suffered so that we could not begrudge his going.

Thinking of Eric now, I realize that his life with all its stages was encapsulated within our longer ones. Contemplating it, we can learn about the giving and receiving of care, friendship, even love, about changing, aging, and dying—about how things are for living beings on this earth. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

FTT FOR THE CABINET?

PERSONAL CONDUCT & PUBLIC LIFE

Poor John Tower. As I write this he is still twisting in the wind, accused of too much coziness with defense contractors, too much boozing, and too much womanizing.

Unfortunately, the press that reports the allegations of his womanizing never defines the term precisely. What, exactly, is womanizing? And how many women do you have to have before you can fairly be charged with it?

In all events I applaud the revival of interest in the nation's sexual virtue that the Tower inquiry seems to portend. We are on our way to becoming not only a kinder and gentler nation but a more chaste one as well; and I am confident that the terrible example that has been made of John Tower's misdeeds will

strike sexual terror into the hearts of libidinous young Americans—and perhaps libidinous old ones as well.

But for my part, though I'm sure I deplore as much as any Senator Tower's misconduct with women, I find it hard to work up a head of steam about it when I contemplate him as a prospective secretary of the Department of Defense. It must be that I've grown too old. That explains why I have failed to catch the recent wave of enthusiasm for chastity in public leaders. (Be it confessed to my shame, I never got upset about Gary Hart's affair with Donna Rice, either). I incline to the antique view that a public official's sexual conduct or misconduct is not usually a public matter or a reliable guide to his or her conduct of public business—except, of course, when it involves relations with, say, Russian spies

or persons carrying on simultaneous liaisons with Russian spies. Thus the British public of a generation ago had a perfectly legitimate, albeit somewhat prurient, interest in John Profumo's extracurricular activities with Christine Keeler.

I am genuinely bothered, however, by Tower's coziness with defense contractors. And if there is truth in the charge that he drinks too much, I'm bothered by that, too. But if he is guilty of womanizing—well, what are we to make of it? Politicians and public figures are sinners like everyone else. So the most relevant question becomes, which sins are the most incompatible with specific public offices?

When I ask myself that, I find that womanizing, however destructive it may be in other respects, does not rank high on the list of impediments. Indeed, history suggests that it ranks lower than quite a number of personal traits not even considered sins—stupidity, for example, or laziness, or the kind of mental dullness that renders a person incapable of seeing a problem from someone else's point of view. Lust for battle, lust for weapons, lust for power, money, or the oblivion of intoxicants—these all seem to me far more pertinent to choosing a secretary of defense than lust for the opposite sex.

At the same time I admit that I am not perfectly consistent in these matters. Despite the principle of indifference just

enunciated, from time to time I have been distressed by the sexual misconduct of prominent public figures. Not because they were sinners; so are we all, and judgment belongs to God. Not because (in these particular cases) their actions were public betrayals of the public trust; they were, at the time, not widely known.

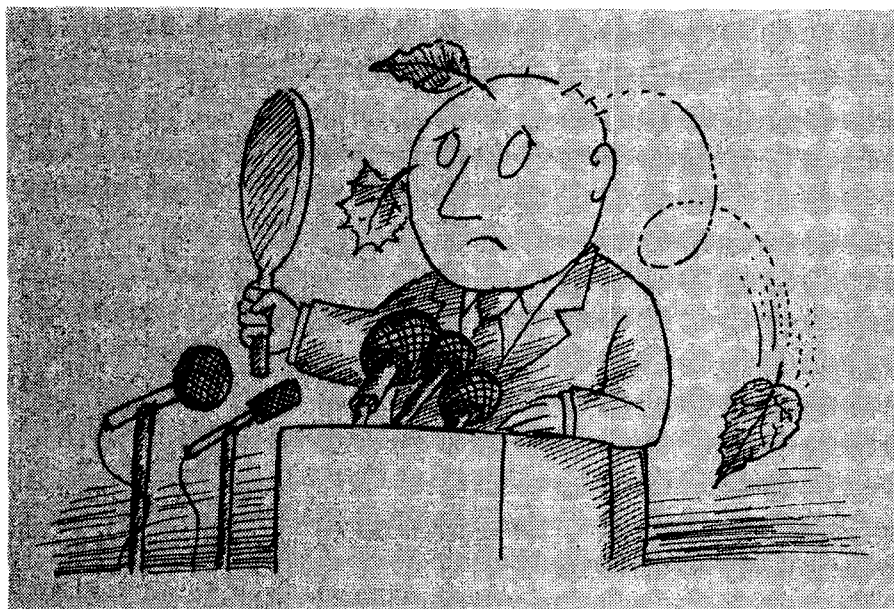
If President John Kennedy had limited his extramarital escapades to one or a small number of women to whom he had a genuine romantic attachment, that would have been one thing. Perhaps it would have only added drama and glamour to an already dramatic and glamorous life. It would have been something like Franklin Roosevelt's relationship with Lucy Mercer, which, no matter how unfortunate it may have been for his marriage, enhanced the drama of his life. If FDR's affair counts as a moral failing, at least it counts as a dignified moral failing. But Kennedy! There were far too many women, and his relationships with them were far too casual. These were not simply moral lapses, they were moral lapses that became dramatic lapses as well. The heroic and tragic story of Kennedy's life suddenly sinks to levels of bathos when we reach the part about his girlfriends—especially the girlfriend who was simultaneously the girlfriend of Sam Giancana, the Chicago mafia big-shot. It is as though Homer had told us that Achilles, in addition to sulking in his

tent and ferociously killing Hector, earned some spare change by selling recreational drugs to the Greek troops.

Martin Luther King, Jr., was even more of a disappointment. Thanks to electronic bugs installed by J. Edgar Hoover, who was looking for Communists but found women, we learned about King's extramarital activities while on the road for civil rights and nonviolence. Such misconduct does nothing to impair his reputation as a great political figure and as America's premier champion of civil rights for blacks. But King was more than a politician and a movement leader. If Kennedy reminded us of Greek heroes, King reminded us of Hebrew prophets and Christian saints. He still stands as a great witness to the reality of the spiritual order; after all, it was his belief in this order that guided him throughout an arduous career and led him to an almost voluntary martyrdom. Yet one expects saints and prophets to be models of sexual fidelity; King's want of discipline, while it doesn't make it impossible to view him as a saint, certainly makes it more difficult to do so. If Kennedy's having girlfriends damaged his heroic image, so King's damaged his image of sanctity.

Finally, there is Wade Boggs, the perennial American League batting champ, who is the target of a palimony suit by Margo Adams. Now, I certainly don't look to professional athletes for models of chastity. But many of them are models of devotion to their craft, and there is none more devoted than Boggs. So it came as something of a surprise that he would allow his total commitment to the game to be interrupted by the distraction of an extramarital affair. But Boggs is handling it well. Despite the suit, despite public ridicule, despite unending attention by the press, he continues to be the best hitter in baseball. With his bat he proves that his devotion to his craft is superior to a world of noisy distractions.

But John Tower is no Wade Boggs; he is no Martin Luther King, Jr.; and (like Dan Quayle) he is no John Kennedy. Stop worrying about whether John Tower is a womanizer; start worrying about what kind of secretary of defense he'll be. □



A REPUBLIC OF COUCH POTATOES

THE MEDIA SHRIVEL THE ELECTORATE

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS

The election of 1988 sent an urgent signal that something is wrong with the political soul of American democracy. The campaign was more than negative. It was a year when civility "took it on the chin," one in which, on talk shows as in politics, nastiness "became a commodity" (Lena Williams, *New York Times*, December 18, 1988). Even so, it had precedents.

In 1888, President Grover Cleveland, who had survived considerable tarring four years earlier, faced smears and distortions at least the equal of 1988. His former opponent, James G. Blaine, charged that Cleveland had appointed to office 137 convicted criminals, including two murderers, seven forgers, and several brothel keepers. Mrs. Cleveland was forced to deny the rumor that the president beat and abused her. It was said that Cleveland was a dogmatic liberal (of the nineteenth-century variety) and the equivalent of a "secular humanist" because he was reported to have said, "I believe in free trade as I believe in the Protestant religion."

Most notoriously, Matt Quay, the Republican boss of Pennsylvania, engineered a scheme by which a Republican supporter, posing as a former British subject, wrote to the British ambassador asking which candidate would best advance Britain's interest. The ambassador, Mr. Sackville-West, injudiciously replied that Cleveland's free trade sympathies made him preferable, and Republicans exultantly portrayed Cleveland as unpatriotic and, especially in Irish wards, as the tool of British imperialism.

Nevertheless, there is something new and alarming about the incivilities of the presidential campaign in 1988. In the first place, the electronic media give greater force and currency to scurrilities, just as television makes innuendo visible: Blaine's attack on Cleveland's appointments had nothing like the impact of a glowering Willie Horton, illustrating Republican

claims that Dukakis had been "soft on crime," or of pictures of garbage afloat in Boston harbor. Moreover, contemporary voters are more exposed to and dependent on mass media.

In Cleveland's day, the press could still be described, in the terms Tocqueville used earlier, as a form of political association. There was a mass press, but the great majority of newspapers were local, the voices and guardians of community. Information from national campaigns and leaders reached most voters only through local editors, leaders, and opinion makers who interpreted it and passed on its propriety and authenticity. In 1988, the media spoke to more and more citizens directly, without intermediaries; gatekeepers could not protect us when the fences had been trampled or pulled down.

In 1888, American politics was still dense with associations, and for both parties, the presidential candidate was only the chief figure in a campaign made up of a myriad of local campaigns in states and wards. Cleveland, in fact, did not campaign at all, considering huckstering beneath the dignity of his office, and Benjamin Harrison's more active office-seeking was very limited by our standards.

Law and technology have combined to create a centralized presidential politics dominated by national media and party committees. In campaigns, as in voting, congressional and local elections are sharply distinct from the presidential contest, so much so that it seemed anomalous, on election night, when candidates for governor and U.S. senator in Montana received about the same percentage of the vote as their party's nominee for president.

The "nationalization of the electorate" has been a major political theme of the century, the result of an effort to open politics to individual citizens, freeing them from the control of local elites. Progressive reformers, advocates of the primary system, were also inclined to celebrate the mass media, just as their successors urged a more responsible two-party system. In one respect, the breaking down of racial barriers to political participation, the process has been pure gain. It has become increasingly clear, however, that the grand design of the reform tradition has failed.

Despite prolonged campaigning, despite vast expenditure of

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS teaches political science at Rutgers University. He is the author of *The Idea of Fraternity in America*. This article is excerpted from his chapter, "The Meaning of the Election," to be published in April in *The Election of 1988* (Gerald M. Pomper, et al.) by Chatham House Publishers, Inc.

money (in which, in 1988, the two parties were virtually equal), despite the advice of experts and the easing of rules for voter registration, turnout fell—as it has, with the exception of the New Deal years, throughout this century. This “demobilization” of the electorate is too profound and too persistent to be explained by the requirement of registration or other barriers to voting. In 1988, the fraction of adult Americans who went to the polls was almost 20 percent lower than it was in 1960, when racial discrimination still kept masses of black Americans off the electoral rolls. In Todd Gitlin’s axiom, “As politics grows more professional, voting declines.”

The affective distance between citizens and public life is great and growing. When they vote for president, voters must evaluate candidates, whose characters they know only superficially, for an office in which character is crucial. We lack the peer review that, in earlier years, was provided by party leaders and opinion makers who controlled nominations and guided campaigns. In 1884, the discovery that Grover Cleveland apparently had fathered an illegitimate child provoked the response that such private failings, then as now the focus of media attention, are not the most important indices of *political* character, and Cleveland won the election. In 1988, by contrast, while Gary Hart’s derelictions shattered his candidacy, voters did not appear to notice that, after all his years in the Senate, Hart was endorsed by only one incumbent Democratic senator. Judgment by peers is yielding to an audition by the media, and private proprieties may now outweigh public virtues.

Be that as it may, citizens *are* dependent on mass media for news and for the interpretation needed to make sense out of the bewildering ravelments of contemporary life. At the same time, the media are great concentrations of power, remote and distant “private governments” that decide who will speak to us and on what terms. In the media’s version of deliberation, citizens have no voices; one cannot “talk back” to a television set, and citizens can assert their dignity only by refusing to listen. Of course, a displeased viewer can also change channels, but this “receiver control” is almost entirely negative, given the media’s tendency toward a homogenized message.

Yet media decision makers know that, while the power of the media as a whole is overawing, any *single* medium is vulnerable, its position still more precarious because media

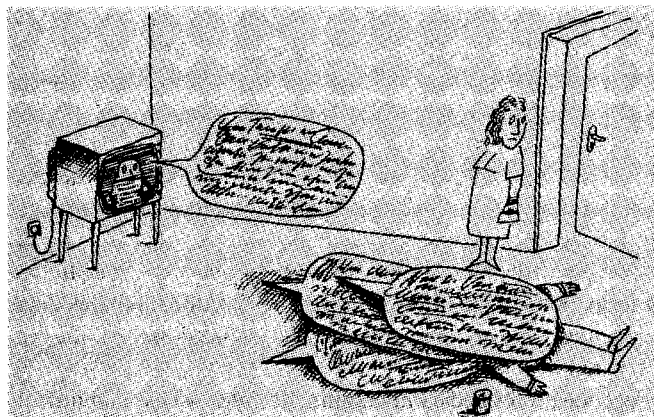
domination invites resentment. Changing channels is as easy as it is because national television has no organic relation to our lives; a local newspaper or radio station is part of, and often indispensable to, the day-to-day life of a community, but there is no reason why I should prefer ABC to NBC or CBS. The older media, especially the local press, had a position that permitted them to offer “cue giving”—guidance as well as protection—and evaluation was an integral part of their reporting. The electronic media are more anxious to “resonate”; more fearful of giving offense, they cultivate nonpartisanship and a professional neutrality.

Better than the Democrats, the Republicans have understood that this desperate neutrality makes it easy to neutralize the media. Fairly consistently, Republican candidates criticize the media, appealing to the public’s fear of hidden persuaders and joining its resentment of media power. George Bush virtually began his campaign with a contrived face-off with Dan Rather, and he continued to fault the media’s coverage of the election. This media bashing takes the form of asking for fair play or balanced treatment, but its real aim is to insulate a candidate—or a president—from criticism, Teflon-coating its beneficiaries.

The success of this strategy was evident in the media response to this year’s presidential and vice-presidential debates. After the first debate, the media pronounced the exchange a draw, a defensible stance even if a plurality of viewers thought Dukakis had edged Bush. Even John Chancellor’s astonishing claim that Dan Quayle had done well, despite Lloyd Bentsen’s one-sided victory, might be explained as a too-rigid refusal to take sides. But television newsmen showed no reluctance to declare that Bush had won the second presidential debate. Taken as a whole, these comments suggest that if the media did not approach Republican candidates “on bended knee”—Mark Hertsgaard’s description of the Reagan years—they did bend over backward.

Even at its best, however, television reporting (and increasingly, all reporting) shies away from evaluating the substance, or even the accuracy, of what is said in campaigns preferring to discuss the strategy and process of campaigning. Nominally neutral, this emphasis on stratagems effectively tells citizens that the *public* side of politics—and, especially, those questions being argued—is of secondary importance. Even pure quantities, like results of polls and elections, need to be interpreted in the light of momentum and expectations. In this implicit teaching, “real politics” is covert, a business for professionals that can be approached only through inside information supplied by the media.

Parties and candidates, of course, struggle to control the process of interpretation, bypassing the press whenever possible and controlling photo opportunities through carefully contrived events. In 1988, for example, the Dukakis campaign, after beginning with relatively frequent press conferences, followed the Republicans’ example in shielding the candidate from the press. Similarly, both national conventions were



transparently staged to avoid any appearance of conflict and to project optimism, harmony, and concern for "family values." Ironically, the 1988 conference of the Communist party of the Soviet Union featured heated debate, resembling an old-style American party convention as much as the 1988 American conventions called to mind the traditional, totalitarian gatherings of the Communist party.

"Packaging," however, only redefines the role of the media; by pushing debate and decision offstage, it makes citizens even more dependent on the media to search what is said in public for clues to the real deliberations behind the scenes. Public life, increasingly, is mirroring the media's art. Portrayed as trivial or superficial, political events become lifeless and shallow, arguments for cynicism and indifference.

Inherently, the electronic media emphasize the private, self-protective, and individualistic side of American culture at the expense of citizenship and public life. Traditional politics, like older forms of entertainment, drew citizens into public places; the media bring politics to individuals in private retreats. In those settings, private concerns are naturally uppermost, making it harder than usual—and it is always difficult—to appeal to public goods and goals. Politics is dramaturgical: It asks us to step beyond the day-to-day, to see the present in the light of the possible, judging practice by theory. Great politics, like great theater, requires a special space, a precinct for its particular sort of fantasy, from which we reemerge into everyday life. Such distinctions hone and heighten experience; by blurring fantasy and reality so pervasively, television weakens reality's force and fantasy's charm.

Above all else, television is a visual medium, confined to what can be seen and hence to externalities. Sight is our quickest sense, but it is also superficial, and the media's discontinuity of image and affect encourages emotional detachment, adaption rather than commitment. A politics of the visible comes naturally to, and teaches us to be, a world of strangers.

At the most fundamental level, politics is about invisible things. A political society can be symbolized—for example, by the flag, George Bush's talisman in 1988—but it cannot be *seen*. Especially in a polity as diverse as the United States, political community is not a matter of outward semblance but of inward likeness, common ideas and ideals. In this sense, television almost necessarily distorts politics, since it is forced to visualize and personalize things that are impalpable or objective. When events suit the medium, as in television's coverage of the southern civil rights movement, it speaks with

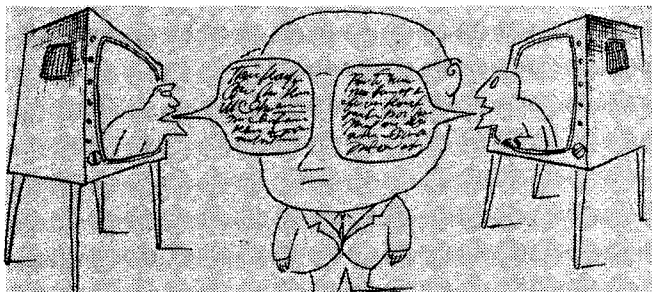
unique power, but more often it is apt to be misleading, silly (Dukakis's tank ride), or mischievous.

To classical political theory, speech, not sight, is the most political of the faculties because it is in and through speech that we discover the boundaries and terms of political community. But political speech—and, especially, *listening* to political speech—is a skill and pleasure that must be learned. It demands an extended span of attention, the capacity for critical reflection, and that art of hearing that lets us separate meaning from its disguises. Always difficult, that command of rhetoric is harder to cultivate in a society as supersonic as ours, and the electronic media actually undermine the arts of speech and hearing.

Preoccupied with holding their audience, television programmers shun anything that might bore us (the Republican argument, this year, against more than two presidential debates), a logic that tends toward the lowest common public denominator. The 1988 debates were question-and-answer sessions in which no comment could run longer than two minutes; in 1960, Kennedy and Nixon began their debates with eight-minute opening statements. In the 1970s, the average "sound bite" allowed a public figure was fifteen to twenty seconds, and the president was given as much as a minute. Pretty thin at best. But in the 1980s, the figure has declined to ten seconds for *all* public figures. It symbolizes the decline of speech that George Bush, admiring the refrain, made "Don't Worry, Be Happy" into a campaign song, either ignoring the words or trusting that American voters would not notice their very contrary lesson.

"Almost the only pleasure of which an American has any idea," Alexis de Tocqueville wrote, "is to take part in government and to discuss the part he has taken," and even women "listen to political harangues after their household labors." More recently, Frank Skeffington, Edwin O'Connor's fictional mayor, spoke of politics as America's "greatest spectator sport," in which performers could, at least, rely on a critical mass of knowledgeable fans, but Skeffington was already sounding "the last hurrah." In 1988, public speech seemed to be degenerating into shouted incivility, the tough talk of playground squabbles, at best a preface to politics.

America cannot be an ancient Greek *polis* or a homogeneous community; political life must find room for our diversities and our privacies, just as prudence must acknowledge the impact of technology and economic change. American democracy needs, and can stand, only so many stanzas of epic poetry. Contemporary politics calls for the more prosaic effort to protect and rebuild locality, association, and party, the links between private individuals and public goods. Even such limited goals, however, presume policy guided by a ruling principle, that middle term between repression and relativism whose better name is citizenship. For both Republicans and Democrats, the election of 1988 indicates the need for a new civility, and for the kinds of word and deed necessary to affirm the dignity of self-government. □



A LEAP IN THE LIGHT

FAITH, SCIENCE, & THE IMAGINATION

WILLIAM J. O'MALLEY

I gave a test last week. One of the true-false items was: "Faith is a blind leap in the dark." Of forty-five high school seniors, most of them exposed for more than a decade to relentless instruction in Catholic orthodoxy, thirty-five answered "true." Why was I surprised? It's happened every year for the past twenty-three, with college and adult students as well as high schoolers.

Where do they get this idea? I can't blame their previous teachers, since in quite a few cases *I* was their previous teacher! I rant and rave; I put on the chalkboard demonstrations worthy of Aristotle or Aquinas or "Sesame Street." But they cling to their conviction like martyrs. On the *fifth* test of the year, they're still agreeing that Yes, indeed, faith is a blind leap in the dark. Confronted with the statement, "Morality changes from culture to culture," the same students answer "true."

Maybe it's their parents: standard teacher cop-out. Maybe it's the culture: the fact of pluralism, the smorgasbord of faith/no faith choices, the sentimentalizing of belief. At a deeper level, there is the taproot of serious faith problems, the epistemological question: How do we know that our perceptions of reality (or our culture's) match what's out there, especially on ultimate matters like the existence of God, the objective grounding of morality?

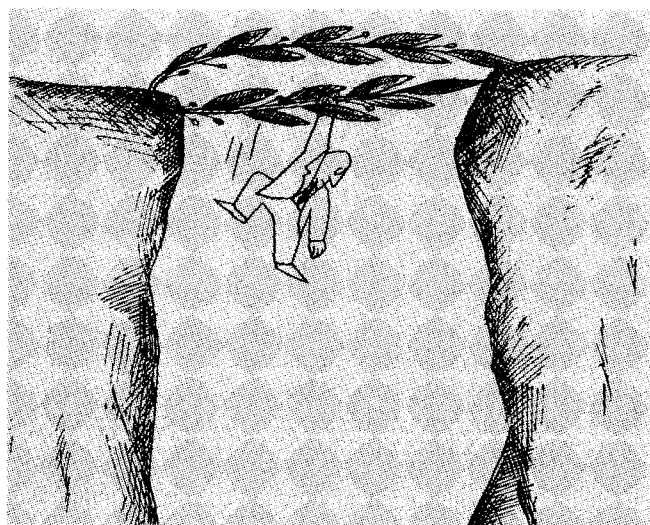
But systematic philosophic doubt is not a widespread human affliction, and blaming the parents or "the culture" is too easy and too broad. What's clear is that most of the students I've taught, and their parents, have no idea what faith really means—even though nearly everything they claim to "know" and most of the opinions they form and the decisions they make are acts of faith.

I think of Greg Louganis. On one improbable occasion, after a lifetime of making picture-perfect dives, he cracked his head and crashed. But he got his stitches, climbed that ladder, and once more soared confidently out into the empty air. That was an act of faith—emphatically not a leap in the dark but an opinion/decision based on all those uncountable other dives, his demonstrated skill, a coach's advice. It was the taking of a *calculated* risk based on a great deal of evidence that—still—

was not conclusive enough to compel assent or guarantee success.

That's not a novel thought; we've all been in similar situations ourselves, many times, every day. Why is it that we don't seem to convey the same way of thinking about *religious* faith? There is a clue, I think, in recent discoveries about the functioning of our brains. Brain scientists now claim that the two lobes of the brain have quite different functions (and since I'm no expert, I must take it on faith that they know what they're talking about and have no reason to deceive me). The left brain is analytical: it gathers data, sifts it, puts the best of it into logical sequence, in order to draw a conclusion, and puts it out to be critiqued. The right brain is imaginative: it has hunches, sees a question in context, "senses" that this particular answer—even if the evidence is still inconclusive—"feels right." Now, the evidence available to solve any problem worth the name or to arrive at a decision in matters of consequence is rarely, if ever, "so clear and distinct that I have no occasion to doubt it," as Descartes demanded. It follows that purely left-brain conclusions are usually half-witted.

The left brain, unfortunately, is associated with what we have always considered "masculine": decisiveness, rigid logic, impartiality. The right brain is associated with what we have wrongly dubbed "feminine": receptivity, creativity, and, alas, bias and feather-headed sentimentality. The left brain is "Greek": highly speculative; a statement is trustwor-



WILLIAM J. O'MALLEY, S.J., teaches theology and English at Fordham Preparatory School in the Bronx, New York, and is the author of *Scripture and Myth* (Paulist Press).

thy (epistemologically sound) if it is logical and reasonable in itself and consistent with other already tested truths; it is "the scientific method." The right brain is "Hebrew": less speculative and more intuitive; a statement is trustworthy because the speaker has proved himself or herself trustworthy. The two travelers at Emmaus "knew" Jesus "in the breaking of bread," a conviction not capable of—nor, for the two men, needful of—logical proof. Yet their conclusion, for all its lack of rigid logic, was nonetheless rational.

The left brain deals with knowledge, using definitions: the "head," as in "head-trip." The right brain deals with understanding, insight, wisdom, using symbols: the "heart," as in "heart-felt." Hopkins captured Margaret's quite genuine awareness of human mortality: "Nor mouth heard, no nor mind, expressed/What heart heard of, ghost guessed."

The strict scientific method achieves its goals by rigorously excluding the subjective and unconfirmable right brain. But even the so-called "soft" sciences, like philosophy and theology and sociology, also seem resolutely to downplay the right brain as some kind of "weak sister," purposely rendering themselves psychologically tone-deaf and color-blind in order to cling to an unflinching objectivity.

Surely our utilitarian, Gradgrind education gives the right brain short shrift. In a budget crunch, the choice between cutting math and cutting art is not a choice at all. Even poetry is so much left-brain exam fodder; students are required to analyze poems, rarely to write them. The Scholastic Aptitude Tests, the narrow gate into higher education, are strictly a left-brain assessment of the candidate's left-brain capacities. And so the right brain—the avenue to understanding and wisdom and faith—atrophies. Or it becomes bloated with junk food. Right-brain starvation may help account for the popularity of romantic novels, comic books, sex-and-violence films, much of rock music.

The downrating of the right brain's function in human knowing is not merely the result of scientific condescension to anything less than objectively verifiable fact (except perhaps for the lamentable case of Carl Sagan). We live in an age of pervasive low-grade paranoia. "Everybody's got an angle; keep your guard up." Santa Claus, it turns out, was a hoax; masturbation doesn't produce warts on your hands; some political leaders routinely lie, genially or sneeringly, and cover up their lies; some godly folk grub for dollars or indulge in kinky, exploitative sex. In these circumstances faith gets difficult, and especially religious faith. Accepting a religion is not the same as choosing a political party: I'm accepting fealty to a God I can neither see nor touch; I am submitting myself to a moral code based on *God's* control of the natures and purposes of things, and not my own. If I'm betting my life and all its choices on this decision, I'm not going off that high board until I have incontestable proof—"scientific" proof. Since it's not in stock, I'll never get wet.

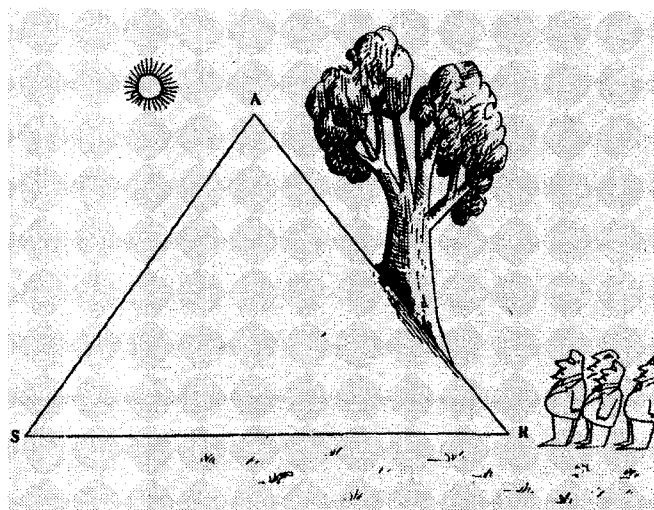
If that seems flip, it's because there's something laughable about this insistence on utter certitude. Even to the scientist

dealing with science, it's not available. Most people who want incontestable proof of anything don't know much about proof, including the kind available from science. Their only direct experience with it has been the "cookbook" science of high school and college, where the scientific "experiments" are not experiments at all but rather recipes guaranteed to have predictable results as long as the student doesn't make a mistake. When a real scientist goes into her laboratory at Sloan-Kettering, she doesn't expect to find the cure for cancer within an hour period—or this semester, or in her whole career. She is approaching the truth asymptotically, hemming it in more closely, which is all we can do with any research. There will always be more to discover about any truth.

Though Werner Heisenberg won the Nobel Prize more than half a century ago for announcing the Principle of Uncertainty, those who naively wait for "scientific proof" don't realize that scientists do not expect to establish anything better than a "high degree of probability." Real scientists wisely couch their findings not in absolute dogmatic formulas but in hypotheses: these conclusions are not carved in stone, there is more to be discovered, but this conclusion explains the data better than any other formulation yet made. We may be closer to the truth; we don't "have" it.

What makes the demand for "scientific proof" before commitment to religious faith even more comical is that the very people who demand it put their lives daily into the hands of doctors, pilots, and cooks—without the slightest evidence of their competence, without even thinking to ask questions about it. In every medical school, some doctor surely had to have graduated last.

What's more, in the history of science the real breakthroughs began in the right brain, not the left. Newton and Einstein and Salk started with a hunch, then sat down to establish logical means of empirically testing whether the hunch was right. The same could be said of the generals and revolutionaries and entrepreneurs who change the direction of human history, whom the man or woman in the streets pictures as coldly calculating, purely "masculine" geniuses. They are, indeed, geniuses, but only because they put their analytical



acuity at the service of a dream, only because of the "marriage" of their "masculine" and "feminine" intelligences.

Reality eludes the cookie-cutter categories and definitions of the left brain seeking answers on its own. Michaelangelo was a most meticulous draftsman, but he had a soaring imagination. Mme. Curie was a painstaking woman of intellect, but one who "saw" a single vial of radium somewhere in the black hillock of pitchblende. My dictionary takes forty-three lines to define "love," and still leaves me wondering. On the other hand, a little muddy kid holding out a bunch of droopy dandelions says "love," too, and says it more satisfyingly than my dictionary.

An act of faith is an opinion, a belief. The old cliché is false: seeing is not believing, seeing is knowing. I don't believe the walls of my room are white; I know it. But I don't *know* God exists—or that he is benevolent and not a sadist, or that he enfleshed himself in Jesus Christ, or that I will survive death. I believe all those things. I have a great deal of evidence to support my beliefs, but I could be wrong. There have been many geniuses who believed in God, but there have been just as many who didn't.

A crucial question in studying the act of faith is—logically, at least—peripheral to it: how many people actually make a whole-headed act of faith in God—a calculated commitment based on intensive left-brain research, an inward, right-brain communion with the Object of the quest, and a personal "sense" that their belief has a higher degree of probability than its alternative? It is my "hunch" that most people—especially but not exclusively the young—have made an act of faith based on their parents' act of faith, or on the evidence that "everybody believes in God," or on the assumption that "you've got to believe in something." But few give me the "feeling" they've reasoned out their opinion and based it not only on reason but on actual experience of God. Maybe that is why so many answer "true" to "Faith is a blind leap in the dark."

The act of faith is an opinion, an opinion about what human beings are for, an opinion about what will make the one life I have worth living—and what will not. It is, in fact, the philosophy of life on which I base *all* other opinions and choices, the touchstone on which I judge their validity. But an opinion is only as good as the evidence that backs it up. What I'm suggesting here is that we've been withholding some of the evidence.

Most believers who have been educated above the level of unquestioning ingestion of the catechism have at least some left-brain basis for their belief. If sales of religious books are any indicator, a sizable number continue to accumulate new evidence and insights, though one would hardly expect Hans Küng's Christian readership to equal *TV Guide's* Christian readership, and much of the body of religious literature that is read is hardly adult. The "Letters to the Editor" sections of most diocesan newspapers seem to give painful evidence that a large number at least of those with the courage to write letters

have not raised their adult understanding of their faith from the Baltimore Catechism (which was written for children) and from literalist images of God, which were the only ones available to writers twenty centuries ago.

The point is that what I said above about education in general was and is as true of religious education: almost exclusively left-brain, and, at least for those trained before Vatican II worked its way down, not only left-brain but unquestioning because unquestionable. Most seminary training in philosophy and theology was from manuals which, in many cases, were little better than more complicated versions of the catechism; and the products of this training came out to teach in universities.

Even methods of prayer were heavily left-brain. Some methods, it is true, stressed using the imagination to place oneself "into" a biblical scene, but—at least in my own case—that was only so that I could pick up some trenchant insight I could write in my "light book" to prove to myself that I was making "progress" and not wasting time. If I can judge from the youngsters and adults with whom I work, their idea of praying is, on the one hand, "saying prayers," and, on the other, asking God to change his mind, or to give definitive left-brain answers to confusing problems. When the person comes up empty-handed too many times, so much for praying. Nobody seems to have told them God is saying, "Look, I'll try

(Continued on page 146)

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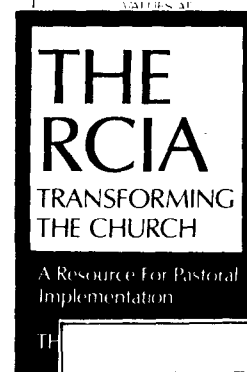
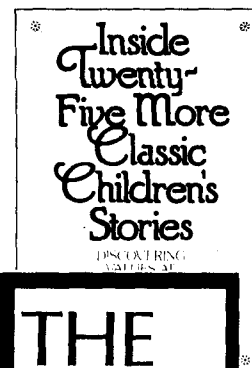
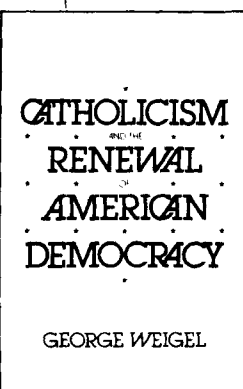
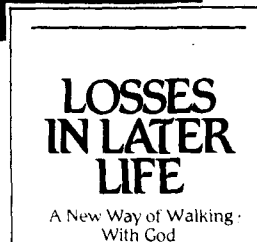
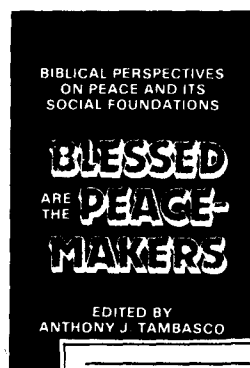
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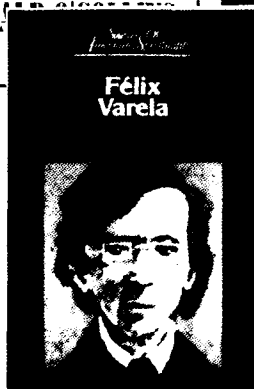
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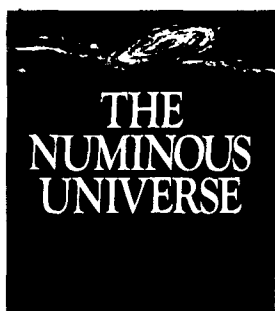
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to give you some 'answers,' but I can't until you stop doing all the talking."

There was and is very little attempt to show adult and young Catholics how to short-circuit the analytical left brain entirely, to let go of being "in charge" of the exchange, to become vulnerable to God—if you will, "feminine" to him—not passive but *receptive*. Eastern methods of praying do that, but it is very difficult to find a left-brain, "cost-effective" way to justify the expenditure of time and discipline and patience needed for such a way of contacting God to "pay off."

But if it began early enough, when children are not only more malleable but less embarrassed by their imaginations, it could have a profound effect on the future of the church. Children don't have to be taught to let go of being in charge, because they're not. Let religious ed teachers learn and then show children methods of relaxing, centering themselves, making an empty space and just letting God come in and rest a while. (I can hear it now: "But how will I grade them?" By third grade, education has become solely a left-brain operation, sorting them out for the system.)

Right-brain powers are important in religion because, in a very real sense, one's *image* of God—the picture we get in our minds when we hear that word—is far more important than one's left-brain *idea* of God. If a person's imagining of God is locked into the images of church art (the stone-faced dignity on a lofty throne; Jesus as a tubercular, blue-eyed goy) his or her dealings with God and insights into God, self, and the relationship between the two will be tragically constricted.

But why need our images of God be limited to the images available to men and women 2,000 years ago? One of the richest—and perhaps most unlikely—sources of insight into God for me in my own praying and for my attempts to make him less distant from the people I teach comes from science and science fiction. Understanding God and understanding modern science require exercises of the same skill: imagination. The person who can become immersed in science fiction sees that reality is most certainly bigger, more varied, more fascinating and mysterious than we suspect. "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your (left-brain) philosophy."

And reading some popularized higher science shows that not only are science and religion not antagonists but that the scientist is now pursuing a quest analogous to that of the theologian, and with the same imaginative tools. To hear a hard-nosed physicist explaining the relationships of muons and gluons and quarks makes a theologian's discussion of the relationships among Father, Son, and Spirit sound less like the ravings of some desert shaman.

Scientists speak unabashedly about neutrinos—which have no discernible mass, no electrical charge, and go through the whole earth scarcely slowed down by the effort. If neutrinos had intelligence, they'd have all the properties a less sophisticated audience gave to angels. Scientists are seriously con-

sidering the possibility that, when the last particle is cracked open, the ultimate "stuff" of the universe would be non-extended energy. Like God, "*ehyeh asher ehyeh*," the pool of existence out of which all things draw their existence. Scientists say there can be no entity which surpasses the speed of light, but that seems to me merely left-brain snobbery, and scientists delight in playing "What if?" What if there *were* an entity faster than light (and how would our limited metallic machines capture such a presence)? Perhaps it would be so fast that it would be everywhere at once, so hyper-alive that it would be at rest. Like God.

God antedated time and space. It is inescapable, then, that he cannot age, that he has no genitals and is therefore neither male nor female. But my problem is that I *am* in time and space, and both lobes of my brain are time-space-oriented. My symbols—just as my definitions—for dealing with entities that are real but intangible, like love and energy and God, are all hypothetical, less than completely adequate. But I want to keep improving them, to cut down a bit more my distance from the Truth. I find, personally, that praying to "a Person made of light," who lurks beneath and leaks out from everything I see, is immeasurably more helpful than addressing an old person-age on a throne.

Jesus said that, unless we become as little children, we cannot even discover the Kingdom, much less enter it. What do children have that the rest of us have lost? Wonder, exuberance, trust, a tireless addiction to asking "Why?" and, at the root of them all, an imagination uncontaminated by analysis or cynicism. Their imaginations objectify their fears of monsters in the closet; they are young enough and humble enough to see fairies couched in cowslips and sense God shining out all over the place.

It is not merely imagination we need; it is also humility—

James Cole

The Scholar in the Hospital

Strangely he seems at home,
a book on the nightstand
like a wing. Blood and urine
are taken first.

What he "thinks"
is politely disregarded,
but disease like ivy
has been climbing through him,
almost cultivated,

almost loved.
And he must wait, must
read, this vine-child or bird-man,
till the last scrupulous detail
is but worried into light.

vulnerability before the truth: God is greater than our minds' ability to capture him, to net him in our definitions and symbols. As Chesterton says, wise men and women do not try to cross the infinite sea—thus taming it, making it finite. Instead, they float on it, blissfully.

With our calculating left brains, we can know a great deal about God. But it is only with our right brains—vulnerable, receptive, “feminine”—that we will ever know God. □

SCREEN

SEDUCTION WITH VENGEANCE

FREARS'S 'DANGEROUS LIAISONS'

Dangerous Liaisons is a colorfully costumed, beautifully designed production. It features another strong acting performance by Glenn Close as a deliciously evil meanie. This time, she's not the mad, out-of-control, would-be lover of *Fatal Attraction*; she's in control of everyone else as the Machiavellian Marquise de Merteuil of Choderlos Laclos's *Liaisons Dangereuses*. The title has been translated to avoid frightening off American audiences. The film ranks near the top of the box office charts.

The screenplay—written by Chris Hampton, who wrote the recent Broadway hit—and the spirit of the film, as directed by Stephen Frears, are close to Laclos's original. Lack of fidelity isn't the problem. The problem is that this radiant but stony film leaves no lasting resonance. It left me bored.

In part this results from a kind of dry, mechanical superficiality in the characters; even wickedness loses interest when it moves in such well-worn ruts. And John Malkovich, as Close's ally, the Vicomte de Valmont, falters several times early in the film. Valmont and Merteuil like to use sex to gain power, or at least to ruin others' self-esteem. Valmont thinks he has a reputation to keep up, so he dedicates himself to harder and harder tasks of seduction to certify his stature as wickedest man alive. Close prompts him to seduce a young engaged woman she knows (Cecile des Volanges, played by Una Thurman); she wants vengeance on an ex-lover who once left her and now plans to marry the innocent Volanges.

To Valmont, such a dalliance is a small challenge. To maintain his honor, he aims to topple a virtuous married woman, the Marquise de Tourvel (beautifully played by Michelle Pfeiffer, in perhaps her best acting ever). When Close declares this impossible, he challenges her to bet her honor—or rather a night in bed—on his success with Tourvel. She accepts the bet, on condition he beds Volanges as well. Pas-de-deux seductions begin, united by one key question: if Valmont “manages” both women, when and how will he get satisfaction from the marquise?

Pleasure in watching such a contrived contest is limited; the game is sexual chess, but only in dry end variations. In

addition, Malkovich never quite gives weight to his elegant Satan. He goes about his “work” in a dedicated but humdrum manner, without the extra dimension an actor like Ian McKellen or Jeremy Irons would have added. Such a one-dimensional being, even outfitted in the finest costumes, still needs depth, or inflection, to prolong interest. It is too late in coming.

Close at least has motive, desire for vengeance against men for their dominance over women. Oddly, she doesn't see how private and selfish her “feminism” is, and that women mostly suffer from it. Calling herself a “virtuoso of deceit,” she sees life as a “war between love and virtue” and lives by the slogan, “win or die.” As fiery as some of these lines are, her naughty bon-mots and exchanges with Malkovich move repeatedly over the same ground. Fine-tooth-comb debates over which is better—love, revenge, betrayal, or cruelty—seem long-winded and abstract, betraying a novel with very few ideas. Feelings, even perverse ones, are drowned out by words. Gorgeous, opulent settings in French chateaus make such dialogues easier to take, but can't relieve their tedium.

Laclos, author of the 1782 novel, was at least original. Like his close contemporary, De Sade, Laclos focused on the dark side of human nature forgotten by the late Enlightenment and early, optimistic Romanticism. Laclos also may have, in the original, developed an important twist, which the movie lamely carries out. Malkovich attains his goals, but only to find himself in love with the virtuous Pfeiffer. Close gets irked that any other woman could compel loyalty (which she herself won't satisfy). Both are destroyed, in short, by the power of the love they demeaned. In the film, this irony could have been provocative had this love ever been genuinely projected by both main characters. But here, ironically, only Malkovich succeeds, in an affecting, final duel. One never believes that Close in any (even perverse) way loved him, so the final plot twists lack power. All the force in the film rests in diabolism, not the way the devils are finally hoist with their own petard.

This emphasis is trendily intellectual today. *Dangerous Liaisons* was produced to make money, to be sure; but costume drama is always a risky sell. What makes this material easier—and compels sophisticated attention—is its clichéd, conventional irony. *Dangerous Liaisons* is a big hit. It has the advantage of making the virtuous and virginal its targets of seduction, immediately prejudicing a modern audience in favor of the elegant villains. Delight in diabolism, or sympathy for the devil, is a traditional (and often legitimate) feeling that art evokes for purposes of vicarious participation. But this film is exceptional because its deck is so stacked, its means so tawdry, its diabolism so conformist.

Perhaps the film is limited by its source; perhaps not. We'll know next winter: Milos Forman (director also of *Hair*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, and *Amadeus*) is now completing his version of Laclos's *Liaisons Dangereuses*, titled *Valmont*. In *Amadeus*, Milos Forman used materials from the period of Laclos to fashion another diabolical tale of greater power and weight; he also orchestrated convincing, genuinely chilling irony against irony.

TOM O'BRIEN

10 March 1989: 147

RELIGIOUS BOOK WEEK

CRITICS' CHOICES

Virginia Sloyan

VIRGINIA SLOYAN is on the editorial staff of *The Liturgical Conference*. Her books include *Signs, Songs & Stories*.

Just as the classic *Dear Theo*, edited by Irving Stone, assumes the form of an autobiography of Vincent Van Gogh (it is, in fact, so designated) and not a series of letters from the troubled artist to his brother, so *Worship: Renewal to Practice* by Mary Collins, O.S.B. (The Pastoral Press, \$11.95, 295 pp.) is much more an integral treatise on liturgy and the ritual process than a collection of prepublished articles.

The essays all make moderate to heavy demands on the reader. Though basic themes recur, there is little duplication of thought; the sixteen articles build tightly on one another.

Collins's narration and use of history to show how the strands of culture, ecclesiology, theology, and liturgical tradition have meshed, and not meshed, over the centuries is highly instructive. But more than that, her skills have the force and effect of a rallying cry to the baptized, without any of the over-simplicity or frenzy the term implies.

Collins traces a path through history marked by dates, names, and documents, leading to a point where it is assumed that both the baptized and the ordained share in the gift of the Holy Spirit, but the shares differ in terms of quality. The laity's share is passive; the ordained's, active. The theory became systematized in the Middle Ages and remains so still. The baptismal liturgy in all its fullness, however, takes us on another road: "God's deed at baptism confers a sacred fitness, makes believers into images of

the saving Lord Jesus, and empowers them to proclaim the Gospel." The praying church knows this, says Collins, and has always known it.

Christian liturgy is discussed here by someone who knows about ritual and its attendant disciplines, who is well versed in theology's formative influence on our Christian faith, and whose grasp of church is sound. The rarity of the phenomenon has implications that extend far beyond the academic world.

How can we celebrate the Eucharist worthily, in a manner that harmonizes with the character of Jesus' own Eucharist, in a world of injustice and disregard for human rights? Leonardo Boff, in his *When Theology Listens to the Poor* (Harper & Row, \$18.95, 147pp.), asks that question in as many ways as there are kinds of deprivation in the world and respects his readers by not always coming up with answers.

I would venture that Sunday assemblies across the land include countless worshipers whose concern for social justice is intense, matched only by frustration at their own powerlessness to take effective action. These same persons have figured out that eucharistic worship and a more just communion of sisters and brothers are intimately related, but too often their worship experience weakens the connection and sometimes belies it.

Only when the church—Boff transforms the word into "we" in a way few are able to achieve—sees reality from the eyes of the poor can the crucial connection between celebration and conflict be made. "What is being celebrated is the obliteration of the conflict," Boff says. "When we view reality from the perspective of the poor, that reality simply must be transformed."

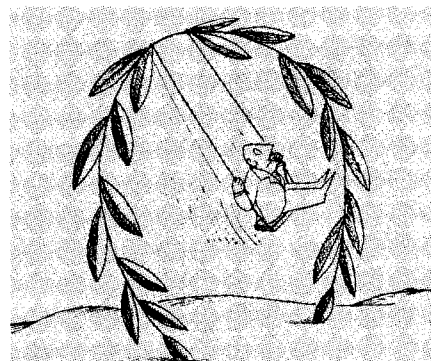
While that summarizes much of the book's intent, it doesn't do justice to Boff's connections and the distinctions.

Readers, not skimmers, have a treat in store—but it's the kind of visual treat that opens our eyes wider than many of us had bargained for.

When I opened *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers* (Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, NCCB/USCC, \$18.95, 433 pp.), the first thing I did was remove its paper cover. Favorite maxims aside, you can tell a prayer/blessing book by its binding. Beautifully bound in red with a simple, gold cover design, and enhanced with good illustrations and sturdy ribbon markers (the latter are available when the collection is ordered through Liturgy Training Publications), the volume points to planners and designers who know something about the aesthetics of worship. Put in the hands of adults or children in the setting of their homes, it will say: "Stand tall. What we do together is important, and lovely!"

For their dignity, form, simplicity, and occasional unpredictability, the prayers and blessings that appear without attribution are rich supplements to the cited selections: from Judaism, the Christian Scriptures, the saints, hymns, bishops' pastorals.

The book's title is slightly deceiving, though I would guess intentionally so. We are being instructed that blessings are events, often a good deal more than the table prayers we are used to. And so we are treated to invocations, blessings, a



Scripture reading, silence, and a song text in the "Blessing upon Returning from a Journey." For all the teachable moments, big and little, in our households, the book is a mine of gold.

Ernan McMullin

ERNAN McMULLIN is director of the Reilly Center for Science, Technology, and Values at the University of Notre Dame. He writes on seventeenth-century science, on contemporary theory of science, and on the relations between religion and science.

Two recent books by Cambridge dons present an interesting contrast. Both authors are physicists. One, in his sixties, has recently been ordained an Anglican priest, and now serves in campus ministry in the university where he formerly held a prestigious chair of physics. The other, in his forties, is gradually dying of a degenerative neurological disorder which has left him incapable of communicating except by pressing a key connected to a computer; he occupies the Lucasian Chair of Mathematics, once held by Isaac Newton.

In *One World* (Princeton, \$7.95, 114 pp.), John Polkinghorne discusses the natures of physical science and of theology, and argues that they have much in common. Theology explains the source of the rational order which science investigates; science establishes the general features of that order, and hence sets conditions that a theological account of the Creator and his activity must satisfy. Both stories must be taken with equal seriousness, and where tensions occur, the Christian must have confidence that these can be reconciled. Reality comes in layers; new properties emerge as complexes appear. In God, these levels find their source, their connection. The text works by way of suggestion, rather than argument. Polkinghorne wants the reader to see through his eyes a quantum world that is no more—and no less—mysterious than the world of sacrament and miracle.

Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* (Bantam, \$18.95, 198 pp.) has stayed longer at the top of the non-fiction best-seller list than any other book about science in recent times. Hawking has a flair for exposition; he can take the most abstruse idea and find an analogy that makes it at least moderately intelligible to the average reader. He ranges over the entire field of cosmology, and gives us asides along the way as he details how his own contributions to the field came about. What sets off his book, apart from the skill and authority of the author, is the question he keeps raising: if physics can once explain the initial conditions of the universe, as it seems close to doing, "what place, then, for a creator?" He seems to suppose that the Christian notion of creation is necessarily tied to a beginning in time, an assumption that Aquinas rather convincingly refuted a long while ago. And his manner of dispensing with a beginning in time involves a risky logical leap: the "no-boundary condition" which enables him to do without an initial singularity (a "beginning") applies only to imaginary time (which he had earlier described as "merely a mathematical device"). At the crucial moment in the argument he then asks: but what if imaginary time is the real time? Or what if questions about "reality" are meaningless in the context of scientific theory, and the only thing that matters is which "time" allows us to predict best? "What ifs?" of this sort need to be watched, and ought to lead the reader to be wary about the quality of the speculations with which the book concludes. Nevertheless, this is an exciting work, one that will provoke the right sort of discussion.

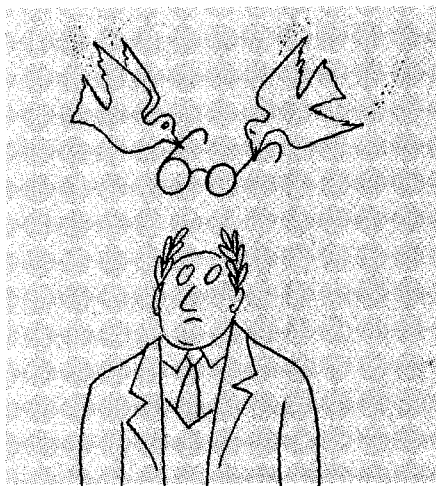
Five centuries ago, the peoples of the West almost universally believed in a Creator God. Today, belief in God has ebbed. How did this change come about? In an erudite essay in the history of ideas, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (Yale, \$27.50, 445 pp.), Michael Buckley, S.J. traces the sources of the change back to the theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who met the new challenges to theistic belief not by calling on Christology or religious experience but upon philosophy. And the philos-

ophers turned to Nature: impersonal nature was made the primary warrant for the personal God of Christianity. Buckley holds Descartes and Newton mainly responsible for this turn to a God who could be known only by abstract inference. Religion thus became alienated from its own true nature, and scientific theism led, by an inexorable dialectic, to atheism. The author obviously has in mind a moral for today: the Christian ought not rely on science or philosophy as the primary grounds for belief in God. Philosophy (not natural science) can disclose the need for a transcendent source of being, but the fundamental witness to the Christian God must testify to his Father in heaven. My only cavil with this dense and valuable work is with the author's Hegelian belief in the efficacy and autonomy of ideas. My own guess is that there are many other factors at the origins of modern atheism—social, political, psychological, technological. Even if the theologians of the Renaissance had *not* made the fateful choice they did, I wonder whether the situation for belief in God would be all that different today.

In fall, 1987, a group of physicists, theologians, and philosophers met at Castel Gandolfo to discuss the mutual relevance of their disciplines to one another. The resulting essays appear in a volume, *Physics, Philosophy, and Theology: A Common Quest for Understanding* (Notre Dame, \$14.95, 419 pp.) edited by Robert Russell, William Stoeger, S.J., and George Coyne, S.J. Prefacing it is a message from Pope John Paul II, who sponsored the conference. The message bears close reading; it is without a doubt the most important and most specific papal statement on the relations of religion and science in recent times. Religion and science are distinct modes of inquiry; neither is the premise for the other. Yet there has to be a larger framework of understanding to which both contribute, and where each assimilates the insights of the other. This process is a tentative and continuing one; the use by contemporary theologians of a scientific insight no more commits the church to that insight than did the use by the medieval church of insights from Aristotelian science to express the nature

of the sacraments or the Incarnation. The eighteen papers that follow provide an on-the-whole cautious assessment of the present situation. None of them argues for a natural theology of the traditional sort, taking its start from specific features of the natural world. C.J. Isham's excellent essay on the implications of quantum cosmology for the doctrine of creation gives a more balanced account of the topic than does Hawking's book. One can still detect a tendency in some of the essays to attribute a greater religious significance to recent science than the evidence seems to warrant. It is natural on the part of a scientist who is also a Christian believer to find resonances where others do not detect them. But the moral drawn by Buckley warns us of the risks inherent in this.

The Galileo story never seems to lose its attraction for the modern mind. For those who like historical novels, Pietro Redondi's *Galileo Heretic* (Princeton, \$29.95, 356 pp.) may be recommended as a good read. It propounds the rather outrageous thesis that the real source of the church's opposition to Galileo was not his defense of Copernican views but the threat posed by his atomism to the eucharistic doctrine. It does so, however, with such flair and with such an ingenious deployment of slender evidence that the reader tends to be swept along. Redondi brings to life in vivid prose, the Rome of Bellarmine and Galileo, though he also obscures the real issues at stake between the two great protagonists of the old and the new. Worth reading nonetheless.



Marilyn Chapin Massey

MARILYN CHAPIN MASSEY, formerly professor of religion at Harvard University, is now vice-president of Marymount Manhattan College. She is the author of several books, most recently, *The Feminine Soul: The Fate of an Ideal* (Beacon).

My adventures in reading began at the Barnes & Noble on Eighteenth Street in New York City, where I was jostled by students from all the city's colleges looking for bargain texts. Preparing to teach a freshmen philosophy course, I had come to check on the availability of my favorite translation (G.M.A. Grube) of Plato's *Republic*. There it was in bulk, right next to the translation by Allan Bloom, the now famous author of *The Closing of the American Mind*, which has set the terms of debate within and about higher education today.

My act of reaching past Bloom's translation, and in fact, my very presence that day in the midst of the wildly diverse students of New York City was my personal act of defiance of him and all of his sympathizers, who equate recovering a historical canon of great works with defending the moral fiber of our culture. In contrast to Bloom's despair about today's uncultured freshmen and their insensitivity to classics, I felt intellectual excitement about my opportunity to read *The Republic* with a special group, none of whom would have been invited to the party at which Socrates imagined his ideal city. The freshmen in my college come from the great variety of the city's public and private schools, and this particular class would be entirely female, ranging in age from eighteen to forty-eight.

To help me brush up on my Plato and to feed my interest in hermeneutics, I read *Platonic Writings, Platonic Readings*, an excellent volume of essays edited by Charles L. Griswold, Jr. (Routledge, Chapman, & Hall, \$13.95, 321 pp.), which applies the insights of recent

textual theory. All of the essays are interesting and readable. I especially appreciated Diskin Clay's "Reading the Republic" and Griswold's own essay, "Plato's Metaphilosophy: Why Plato Wrote Dialogues," which addresses the political and moral aims of Plato's writing in relation to today's philosophical relativism. Although I did not agree with all of Griswold's piece, it stimulated me to set the terms of my own reading experiment.

It was a joyful experiment, and I hope you have the privilege, as I did, of revisiting *The Republic* with superb readers who teach you to see what is, and is not, in the work. I gained new insights into how defensively Plato dealt with fragility and finitude, and how comforting it would be, but how impossible it is, to believe his version of truth and justice as a contemporary New York City woman. Most intriguing to me was how these uninvited guests zeroed in critically on Plato's concept of the necessity of the censorship of literature in the education of the just man. How significant, I privately thought, that this ancient concept does not die.

At the end of this class, I received a thank-you book from a student who read my mind. She gave me Nadine Gordimer's *The Essential Gesture: Writing, Politics & Places* (Knopf, \$16.95, 356 pp.), a set of essays about her experience as a writer from 1963 to the present in South Africa. By virtue of her protest of apartheid, Gordimer identifies herself as a minority in the white minority.

The entire book is gripping, but the last section, "Living in the Interregnum," is especially telling for our debate about canons in higher education. It is a reflection about censorship and suppression in society of the words, stories, and bodies of the uncultured. Gordimer maintains that "acceptance of the concept of a culture based on an elite dispensation to the masses who cannot create anything valid for themselves, acceptance of the role of literature in life according to that culture, are firmly based on a particular myth of power." Only by resisting the real and oppressive effects of that myth on the black majority, can one understand that "culture in

South Africa is something still to be made," culture, that is, defined "as the vital force generated by the skills, crafts, legends, songs, languages, sub-literature as well as literature—the living expression of self-realization—in the life of the people as a whole."

Gordimer's work resonates with the essays in *Feminism & Foucault: Reflections on Resistance*, edited by Irene Diamond and Lee Quincey (Northeastern, \$14.95, 246 pp.). Each essay applies Michel Foucault's principle of the inexorable relationship of power and knowledge to his insistence on the necessity of unearthing those essential knowledges of human struggle beyond and beneath the limits of official knowledge and disciplines.

Capping the volume is Sharon Welch's essay, "The Truth of Liberation Theology: Particulars of a Relative Sublime." Like Gordimer, who feels the tenuous ambiguity of being a white and remaining sensitive to the experiences of blacks in South Africa, Welch argues that acceptance of the relativity of any purportedly universal principle of justice is not equal to moral paralysis. As if in support of Gordimer, Welch writes, "A concept of freedom is most effective as it is rooted in the imagination of the people to be freed, if it does indeed speak to something in their experience and history."

In an act of moral responsibility, Gordimer has dared to try to enter into the imagination of the people to be freed in South Africa and, consequently, to bear both the censorship of her government and the suspicion of the oppressed. In this act, she stands as a counter-figure to Bloom and as a paradigm for those scholar-teachers who have the ethical courage and brilliance to continue to tread beyond the boundaries of disciplines and canons to discover essential gestures and knowledge yet unheeded, and thereby, help us understand that

American culture and our canons are things still, indeed always, to be made.

Bernard F. Swain

BERNARD F. SWAIN is executive editor of The Catholic Free Press (Worcester, Massachusetts) and the author of *Liberating Leadership* (Harper & Row, 1986).

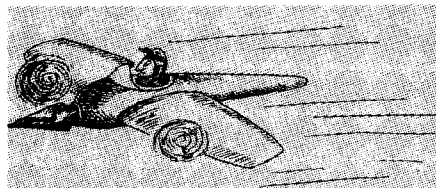
As a white, male, first-world Catholic whose theological training largely predated the arrival of liberation theology, I have waited patiently for a complementary theological movement, speaking in some fundamental way to the social and political experience of people like me.

To be sure, we've seen North American liberation perspectives aimed at the experience of women, Hispanics, the poor; all these help us understand how the Gospels appear from the oppressed side of North American life. But perspectives focusing on the alienation of dominant peoples—the affluent, the suburbanite, the upwardly mobile—remain relatively rare.

Much of such writing follows two strains. The first is the "magisterial" strain, including both episcopal and papal social documents and commentaries on such documents. The second, "intropective" strain, concentrates on justice in the internal life of the church.

Gregory Baum's *Theology and Society* (Paulist, \$12.95, 298 pp.) exemplifies the former. Although this collection of recent essays applies (and defends) liberation theology within the North American (and especially Canadian) context, Baum's distinct contribution is his analysis of Pope John Paul II's social teaching. Baum, since *Laborem exercens* appeared, has persuasively argued that the pope's encyclicals constitute a major breakthrough in developing a Christian, non-Marxist critique of postindustrial capitalism.

While Baum offers depth and nuance, *Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret* (Orbis, \$8.95, 134 pp.) takes a



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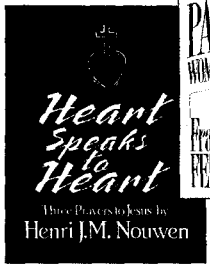
different tack by scratching a lot of surfaces. Jesuits Peter Henriot, Eduard De Berri, and Michael Schultheis survey the history of social doctrine from *Renovatio* through *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, including synod documents, U.S. bishops' pastorals, and works by bishops' conferences in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The book is in three

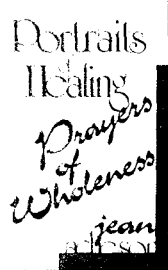
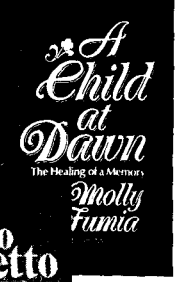
parts: twenty pages of historical overview; detailed, text-referenced outlines of eighteen major documents; study guides adaptable to classroom or parish use.

The second, "introspective" strain was the clear aim of Leonard Swidler and Herbert O'Brien (a pseudonym) in editing *A Catholic Bill of Rights* (Sheed &

Ward, \$8.95, 187 pp.). This book consists of over thirty essays by prominent Catholic writers and thinkers on topics ranging from dissent and judicial procedures to office-holding, academic freedom, working conditions, and wages. Appendices provide useful contextual texts from the 1971 synod, canon law, and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In a far more pointed and probing study, Edward Schillebeeckx has once again addressed the crisis surrounding ministry in *The Church with a Human Face: A New and Expanded Theology of Ministry* (Crossroad, \$12.95, 308 pp.). Schillebeeckx is responding to difficulties arising from his book *Ministry*, which aimed to present ministry as sharing in a priesthood rooted in the humanity of Jesus, and in the process rejected clericalism as a historical aberration. But this book is far more than a revision; it attempts a "much deeper" analysis of the evolution of the concept of ministry and the theological implications of that evolution. No doubt this analysis will prove both controversial and seminal.



Presenting Spring 1989

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Margaret Farley

MARGARET FARLEY is Gilbert R. Stark Professor of Christian Ethics at Yale Divinity School. Her most recent book is *Personal Commitments: Beginning, Keeping, Changing* (Harper & Row).

Within the field of Christian ethics the range of relevant literature is very broad, indeed. Hence, categories of books come to mind more readily than individual volumes. There are a number of important and interesting contributions, for example, to the presently intense debate over moral relativism. Two books stand out among these, each struggling to accommodate diversity in moral traditions and at the same time to resist a total moral skepticism. Jeffrey Stout's *Ethics after Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents* (Beacon, \$24.95,

338 pp.) works carefully against an interpretation of modern moral discourse as simply "echoing Babel." He wants pluralism but not total confusion, moral diversity (without an abstract universal vantage point for judgment) but still some sense of moral truth. Re-entering this same debate, Alasdair MacIntyre continues to argue in *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?* (Notre Dame, \$22.95, 410 pp.) for conceptions of justice only within particular moral traditions. Here, however, he moves beyond his earlier work to present traditions as not so discrete and as capable of asking questions of one another, overlapping and interacting in their search for rational grounds for justice. Here, there is almost a call for us to learn "second languages" so that the rationality of one community or tradition is not completely unintelligible to another. Neither Stout nor MacIntyre provides easy resolutions to deeply troubling problems, but their analyses also prevent us from too easily stopping at what we consider an impasse in the debate.

There is another kind of book emerging in feminist theology and ethics that also deals with issues of diversity and universality. For example, Letty Russell, Kwok Pui-Lan, Ada María Isasi-Díaz, and Katie Geneva Cannon have brought together women's self-interpreted stories in *Inheriting Our Mothers' Gardens: Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective* (Westminster, \$12.95, 181 pp.). Something similar though more corporate is offered in the volume edited by Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology* (Orbis Books, \$11.95, 192 pp.). Katie Geneva Cannon's *Black Womanist Ethics* (Scholars Press, \$23.95; paper, \$15.95, 183 pp.) contributes an important voice from the experience of African-American women's community. In all of these volumes we have something that ethicists tend to talk about, but women are beginning to do. That is, voices from within diverse communities and traditions are raised in all of their particularity. Yet diverse experiences yield some shared moral questions—questions that do not become ab-

stract just because they may be universal: Are we impelled to condemn commonly recognized injustices and to act for commonly desired goals? Shall we ever laugh over commonly perceived inequities or weep over commonly recognized tragedies or yearn for commonly held hopes?

Finally, ethicists have continued to produce important normative studies and proposals. Perhaps no other book in medical ethics has received more attention this past year than Daniel Callahan's *Setting Limits: Medical Goals in an Aging Society* (Touchstone, Simon & Schuster, \$8.95, 256 pp.). It will be a

ON PROOF FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD, AND OTHER REFLECTIVE INQUIRIES

PAUL VJECSENER

A treatise advancing fresh solutions to fundamental problems that have confronted philosophy and sciences through the ages. The approach is of a Cartesian questioning of all received as knowledge, from the ancient to the present-day, some of it the growing contentions that many basic questions are unanswerable. Correspondingly, the author does also not depend on accepted forms of inquiry, such as theory-formation or other developed methods themselves subjected to questioning. Instead there is a return to common apprehensions, seeing what can subsequently be gleaned from them in a like manner, without recourse in the account to technical language.

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long time before the controversy generated by this careful study abates, at least as long as we care about the issues it addresses. Another set of issues is treated in David Hollenbach's *Justice, Peace, and Human Rights: American Catholic Social Ethics in a Pluralistic World* (Crossroad, \$16.95, 260 pp.). This is a collection of essays with wide-ranging application to our lives as citizens and as members of believing communities.

William Griffin

WILLIAM GRIFFIN covers the religious publishing scene for Publishers Weekly. His own books include the 1986 biography Clive Staples Lewis: A Dramatic Life (Harper & Row) and a newly published novel, *The Fleetwood Correspondence* (Doubleday).

Every intellectual I know complains that too many books are published every year. Not being an intellectual myself, I can afford to say that just the right number are published and that almost everyone who reads can find a hundred books that will appeal to his or her taste. Among my hundred are three outstanding titles that deserve, I think, a larger audience than they have already found.

First is *Harlots of the Desert* (Cistercian Publications, \$25.95; paper, \$11.95; 113 pp.), a title redolent of swanning and swooning about the dunes of early Christian Egypt. The subtitle promises a rather more modest text: "A Study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources." The main source is a collection of Greek texts entitled *Lives of the Harlots*, the women in question being well known, by name at least, to a fair number who have ambled down the ascetical road: Mary Magdalene as the biblical model of repentance; Mary of Egypt as the liturgical icon of repentance; Pelegia, Thais, and Maria the niece of Abraham as images of salvation.

The author of this work is Benedicta Ward, who teaches medieval studies including patristics to Americans at St. Michael's Hall, Oxford; she is happily

remembered for *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* and *The Lives of the Desert Fathers*.

She is also a Sister of the Love of God, an Anglican religious community; and on the street she wears a habit that reminds me that I really must reread Chaucer soon. It was on a street that she met Maria, "a very young girl living in London as a prostitute. One evening she approached me and asked me to help her get away from a life she hated. While we talked, a car drove up and Maria was taken away by her protectors. I dedicate this book to her, asking that the mercy of God may come upon us all." The desert, it seems, is always with us, especially in the big city.

Second favorite is *Miz Lil & The Chronicles of Grace* by Walter Wangerin, Jr. (Harper & Row, \$14.95, 192 pp.), known for such sophisticated, indeed, award-winning children's books as *The Book of the Dun Cow* and *The Book of Sorrows*. Partly fiction, partly faction, like vanilla swirled with chocolate, it contains twelve interwoven stories, six of childhood, six of adulthood.

The stories act as lenses, through which the author views his recent experiences as pastor of Grace Lutheran, an inner-city church in Evansville, Indiana, and recalls the rapidly receding scenes of his youth, with his pastor-father and dramatically intense mother changing residences and residencies in the American and Canadian northwest. Finally, the work as a whole is a sort of self-portrait of a gentle pastor in middle age, whose extended parish is now the literate world.

Third is *Letters: C.S. Lewis/Don Giovanni Calabria—A Study in Friendship* edited by Martin Moynihan (Servant Publications, paper, \$5.95; 126 pp.). Most everyone knows who Lewis was, a professor of medieval and renaissance literature at Oxford and Cambridge; among other things, he was a devout Anglican and a Christian apologist of international reputation. Soon more will know who Don Giovanni is, priest, founder of the religious congregation, the Poor Servants of Divine Providence; he was beatified a year ago by John Paul II.

The book itself is the record of an

unusual spiritual correspondence between a Roman and an Anglican, conducted in Latin between 1947 and 1961. Both were saintly men, which means that one can not only read their book but also, saving their respective theologies regarding the communion of the saints, pray to the one and with the other.

Margaret R. Miles

MARGARET R. MILES is Bussey Professor of Historical Theology at The Harvard Divinity School. Her books include *Practicing Christianity* (Crossroad, 1988), *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Beacon, 1985), and, forthcoming, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West* (Beacon, 1989).

The books that most engaged me during 1988 were those that provided analyses of the social construction of gender, both in the present and in historical societies. What different social roles, abilities, and limitations are/were women and men expected by their society to have? Many social and intellectual historians, literary critics, theologians, and psychoanalysts are investigating past and present societies using gender as a category of analysis. Masculinity and femininity, these authors agree, are neither biological nor natural but socially produced.

Jessica Benjamin's *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (Pantheon Books, \$12.95, 304 pp.) argues cogently that only by examining "the interaction of culture and [intersubjective] psychological processes" can one understand female subordination and male domination in its most concentrated forms—masochism and sadism. Accessible to the educated general reader, the book proposes that what men and women most need from one another is a mutual recognition entailing the acknowledgment of sameness and difference. Critiquing and amending Freudian theory, Benjamin, a practicing psychoanalyst in New York

City, analyzes why it is so difficult to give and get this recognition.

Writing a Woman's Life by Carolyn G. Heilbrun (W.W. Norton, \$14.95, 144 pp.) examines why biographers have usually written about men rather than women. Even when biographers have written about women, Heilbrun says, they have chosen and discussed their subjects on the basis of criteria for male success. A sensitive and insightful examination of women's writing about themselves and other women, Heilbrun ends by discussing her own creation, Kate Fansler, the heroine of Heilbrun's eight pseudonymous mystery novels.

Two 1988 books on the construction of gender in antiquity present different but complementary perspectives. Page DuBois's *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (University of Chicago Press, \$29.95, 227 pp.) urges attention to the particular historical conditions under which gendered discourses have arisen. DuBois's thesis is that "the male subject as a figure for wholeness to which the female and her body are compared. . . is not a universal fact of culture," but occurred at a precise historical moment in Platonic Greek philosophical discourse when women were named as "defective, partial men." Aline Rousselle, in *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, (Basil Blackwell, \$24.95, 213 pp.) reconstructs ancient ideas of male and female bodies from Greek and Roman science, medicine, gynecology, and law, mapping changes in perceptions of the role and value of desire into the Christian era. A fascinating chapter, "The Bodies of Women," describes Aristotle's discovery that "women could conceive even if they did not reach orgasm," replacing the earlier view of the *Hippocratic Collection* that the female orgasm was necessary for conception to occur. Rousselle traces the far-reaching social effects of this marginalization of women's sexual pleasure in cultures that primarily prized in women their reproductive capacity.

Together, these books demonstrate a subtlety and sophistication that signal the maturity of a relatively new conversation about gender and its social effects.

Stephen Happel

STEPHEN HAPPEL is associate professor in the department of religion and religious education at The Catholic University of America, and co-chair of the Arts, Literature, and Religion section of the Academy of Religion.

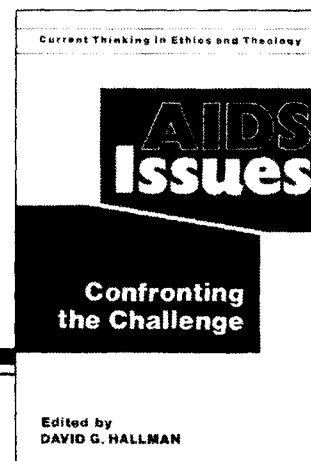
Museums have discovered that our television society likes to attend large exhibitions. Blockbuster shows give public expression to both a thirst for a visual richness, opposed to the drab functionalism present in some modern art and architecture, as well as to a nostalgia for religious traditions discarded by postconciliar iconoclasts. Two catalogues from current exhibitions demonstrate our contemporary secular and religious concerns.

Holy Image, Holy Space: Icons and Frescoes from Greece edited by Myrtali Acheimastou-Potamianou, translated by

David A. Hardy (Athens, \$30, 248 pp., 80 plates) has seventy pages of excellent if brief essays on the role of the icon in the ancient world up through the sixteenth century. It shows that intelligent essays can reflect the inner spiritual harmonies of the visual arts. Moreover, the color reproduction of icons is superb. The exhibit has traveled to Baltimore and Miami and will be in Fort Worth, San Francisco, Cleveland, and Detroit. Watch for it.

The extraordinary presentation (just completed) commemorating Paolo Veronese's works at the National Gallery, Washington D.C. produced W.R. Rearick's catalogue, *The Art of Paolo Veronese, 1528-1588*, with introductory essay by Terisio Pignotti (Cambridge University Press, \$65, 212 pp). It describes the transition toward monumental religious narratives combining color and light in Veronese's later years. The amalgam of humanistic culture, descriptive realism, imperatives of state, and Christian sensibility illustrated in the frescoes for Palladio's Villa Bar-

AIDS Issues



Confronting the Challenge

edited by DAVID G. HALLMAN

Coordinator of the October 1987 Consultation on Ethics and Theology related to AIDS

Deeply practical issues are confronted in this provocative reading in ethics and theology. The chapters are drawn from the historic ecumenical consultation on AIDS which included theologians, social ethicists, persons with AIDS, health care professionals, community service representatives and church denominational members. The contributors argue for the churches to take progressive steps and assist the reader to confront the challenge of AIDS with intelligence and compassion.

"This book is extremely useful in helping people to identify and become involved."

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baro at Maser confronted the Council of Trent's directives to painters and bishops and sparked Veronese's "conversation" with the Inquisition in 1573. His ability to speak with his investigators as an equal is a marvel to later ages. His incarnation of Christian experience in flesh, the textures of cloth, and the power of color and design are not to be missed.

In recent years, Crossroads publishing has developed a small library of good books on Christianity and the visual arts. They have provided us with John Dillenberger's *A Theology of Artistic Sensibilities* (\$22.50, 280 pp., 123 plates), which describes a broad history of Christian interaction with painting, mosaics, and frescoes; then articulates the way in which twentieth-century art has contributed to religious vision and theological thought, and in the final thirty pages, argues for the role of the visual arts in theological education. In a reprinted version of a 1984 text, *The Visual Arts and Christianity in America: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (\$39.50, 290 pp., 184 plates), Dillenberger expands upon this historical analysis by examining the experience of the United States. The first three sections set up a distinction between Catholic and Protestant attitudes toward the visual, and study nineteenth-century views of art and architecture and the role of such art in private and public life. The final new section discusses the role of the visual arts in this century. Jane and John Dillenberger have also edited for publication the unpublished and uncollected essays of Paul Tillich, *On Art and Architecture* (\$24.50, 276 pp.), an excellently edited volume showing us the progenitor of so many interests in religion and the arts. gion and the arts.

Art as Religious Studies, edited by Doug Adams and Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (\$17.95, 247 pp., 27 plates), argues for the primordial role of the visual and the nonverbal in the study of religion. Essays on the visual arts in Judaism (Neusner, Milgrom, Reid, and Apostolos-Cappadona); on Christianity (Miles, Piediscalzi, Cook, and Hendricks); and on the role of the visual in teaching (Empereur, Smith, Adams, Goethals) lead toward three extensive

bibliographies for teachers and researchers in the field. Indeed, in 1989, we can look forward to Jane Dillenberger's *The Image and the Spirit: Essays in Sacred and Secular Art* (a collection of her unpublished papers and lectures), Doug Adams's *Transcendence Within the Human Body in Post-Modern American Art: Segal, DeStaebler, Johns, and Cristo; and Dance as Religious Studies*, a further co-edited volume by Adams and Apostolos-Cappadona. The publishers are to be commended for their attempts to assist us in understanding the incarnation of our religious traditions.

The republication in an edited one-volume edition of Erwin R. Goodenough's *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (Princeton, \$35, 288 pp., 91 plates), makes more accessible an important resource for both Jewish and Christian scholars. The diversity of life in Judaism is shown by the mixture of images present at the Dura Europos synagogue and elsewhere. Jewish borrowings already anticipated the ways in which Christians appropriated Orpheus, Apollo, and Helios as images for the Christ. Jacob Neusner, the editor, has provided an introduction, updated the reading list, and included an index.

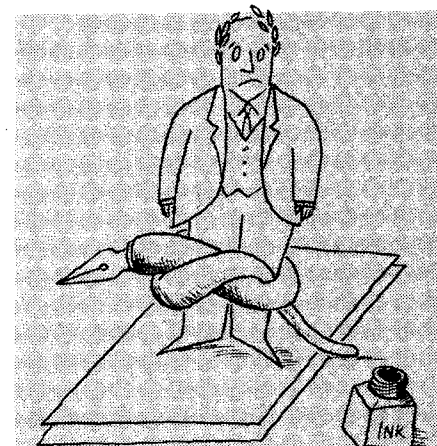
Two final works must be mentioned. Clive Hart has surveyed the ways in which images of ascension have been used by artists in secular and religious themes: *Images of Flight* (California, \$32.50, 300 pp., 103 plates). Emphasizing poetry and the visual arts of the late-Middle Ages and the Renaissance, Hart describes their artistic and spiritual significance. Hart relates the ways in which abstinence from sexual desire and bodily existence permitted Joseph of Cupertino to levitate. The wedding of an inherent Neo-Platonism of the theme and Christian transcendentalism is stressed. The final chapter on images of flight as an internal spiritual pilgrimage is fascinating. It is regrettable that Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang's *Heaven: A History* (Yale, \$29.95, 410 pp., 62 plates), cannot be recommended. Indeed, it should be avoided for its theological over-simplifications and its visual misreadings. Its broad scope, with perhaps necessary generalization, has created a

superficial look at the topic. Unlike Hart's work, the sometimes idiosyncratic information does not always seem to service a larger whole. Incarnation here has traveled far from heaven.

Carolyn Osiek

CAROLYN OSIEK, R.S.C.J., is professor of New Testament at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. She is New Testament Book Review Editor of the Catholic Biblical Quarterly, associate editor of The Bible Today, and editor of the 15-volume series, Message of Biblical Spirituality (Michael Glazier). One of her most recent publications is *Beyond Anger: On Being a Feminist in the Church* (Paulist).

Those who have become sensitized to the overwhelmingly patriarchal viewpoint of the Old Testament and are looking for an overview from a different perspective now have Alice Laffey's *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Fortress, \$12.95, 243 pp.). Intended as a companion to conventional Old Testament introductions, it also makes good reading by itself, with Bible in hand. There is historical information about the social roles and activities of women, brief discussion of the texts about women, and development of themes from a feminist perspective. Most important, it asks the question: *Why were things the way they were for women in these contexts?*



On a different but still biblical note, several recent studies on the Gospel of John mark the transition from seeing it as the timeless "spiritual" Gospel, to seeing it as a contemporary social challenge. Among these are *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel*, by Marianne Meyers Thompson (Fortress, \$11.95, 176 pp.) and *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* by David Rensberger (Westminster, \$14.95, 168 pp.). Thompson rejects the classic characterization of John by Ernst Kasemann as "naïve docetism" (denial of Jesus' humanity), and sets out to show how John's Gospel gives us a profoundly human portrait of Jesus. Her proposed starting point is not our definition of humanity, but rather to let the Gospel speak for itself about what it is to be human. The result is a deeply transformative model of the human Jesus and the human us.

Rensberger takes on the social function of John in its own context, according to what we know from recent attempts at reconstruction, and its message of human liberation through the mediation of symbols in the life of a community. For those who are searching for ways to express the social dimensions of faith and sacrament in biblical language, this book is a real find.

Lastly, for those who want a new look at Christology, there is *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* by Bruce J. Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey (Polebridge, \$15.95, 174 pp.). Instead of Christology "from above" or "from below," the authors propose a Christology "from the side," through social context and constructed meaning. Thus labels of witchcraft (conivance with demons), deviance, and prominence as applied to Jesus in Matthew are examined to show how people of Matthew's day confronted the challenge of Jesus in their lives. The reader new to any kind of social science language may find this book tough going at first, but it is worth the effort. The comparative list of Mediterranean and U.S. values in Table 1 of the appendix alone is worth the price of the book for understanding everything from biblical personalities to contemporary Middle Eastern politics.

Christopher J. Kauffman

CHRISTOPHER J. KAUFFMAN, editor of the U.S. Catholic Historian and adjunct professor of church history at Loyola College in Maryland, has written the histories of the Alexian Brothers, the Knights of Columbus, and the Sulpician Fathers in the United States. He is currently writing a biography of W. Howard Bishop, the priest-founder of the Glenmary Home Missioners.

The Second Vatican Council developed a new apologetic, a fresh articulation of faith suitable to the diverse peoples of the world. Implicit in the Council Fathers' call to discern the "signs of the times" is the need of the historian to provide a lens to improve our vision of the signs of past times.

To properly grind such a lens, historians should consult the best one-volume work on recent trends in theology,

Joseph Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot Lane's *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Glazier, \$59.95, 1112 pp.). Published on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, this dictionary is infused with a historical consciousness and is intended as an aid for "teachers and preachers." The general reader, however, will be pleased with the noticeable absence of the specialist's rhetoric. It is no surprise to find James Hennessey, S.J., the pre-eminent historian/theologian, as the author of the "History" article. As one of the twenty-five central concepts in the work, "Theology" fills twenty-seven pages, is divided into eleven sub-headings, and reveals the pervasive synthesis of *haute culture* and theological reflection. This dictionary should reside alongside Webster as a very useful and informative work; the price makes it accessible to anyone concerned with contemporary renderings of the horizons of belief.

Under the Scribners imprint Macmillan published the excellent three-volume

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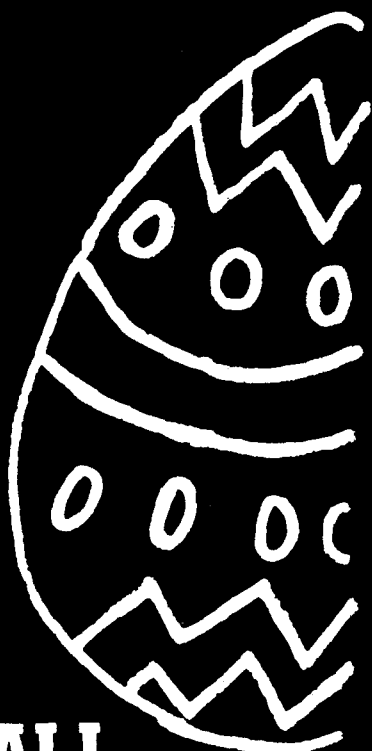
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COMMONWEAL

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Encyclopedia of the American Experience: Studies in Traditions and Movements, edited by Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Williams (Scribners & Sons, \$235, 1882 pp.). The 106 essays in this encyclopedia are not intended just for the specialist. There are lengthy treatments of denominational history as well as "Religions Outside the Jewish-Christian Tradition." The other topics include explorations of "Approaches to Religion in America," "North America: Contrasts and Background," "Religious Thought," "Religion and the Political and Social Orders," "Liturgy, Worship, and Arts," "The Dissemination of American Religion," and "The Missionary Heritage." There is no alphabetical scheme but a 123-page index is very useful. This is a superb work, a must for both academic and public libraries.

Encyclopedia means "wheel of knowledge," that is, a book that embraces the entire spectrum of learning. In this sense it is not all paradoxical to include in this survey a small book, rich in religious culture, by Justus George Lawler: *Speak That We May Know: A Spirituality for Uttering the Inner You* (Meyer-Stone, \$8.95, 96 pp.). This is a very accessible, experience-based book drawing on the author's previous publications in such fields as literary criticism, psychology, politics, theology. It is a book that confirms Sebastian Moore's comment in the Foreword: "...on the potential surprises and revelation in language, Lawler is second to no author I know."

In acknowledgment of the bicentennial of the appointment of John Carroll as the first bishop of the United States, Macmillan has recently published a six-volume work: *Makers of the Catholic Community: Historical Studies of the Catholic People in America, 1789-1989* (Macmillan, \$160 per set). [Editors' note: A review of this series will appear in a forthcoming issue.] Authorized by the National Council of Catholic Bishops and underwritten by a grant from the Knights of Columbus, the series is unified by an understanding of the roles played by the American ethos in the formation of the Catholic community, by

a common periodization, and by a methodology influenced by current trends in historiography and ecclesiology. Because only one book deals with the hierarchy, the series is a critical study of the intersection of the Catholic people's experience and the life of the institutional church. Hence, it celebrates the bicentennial of the local church. As general editor, I was privileged to be a part of this publishing effort.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 130)

be "right" and the other "wrong"?

Rather than dismiss Campbell as "smug" and "condescending," Garvey might well examine his own emphasis and his own need to be "right."

ANNE M. STORZ

Extraordinary Johnson

Los Angeles, Calif.

To the Editors: The Robert Johnson piece, "This Man Has Expired," [January 13] is extraordinary. My compliments to Johnson and to you.

JACK MILES

Thrifts in crisis

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Your editorial ["Thrifts on the Slide," January 13] is certainly aimed at the right target—effectively enough to suggest several points:

(1) *Bailouts:* The FSLIC has been cynical and blatant in selling tax shelters without benefit of legislation. In the case of one Texas bank takeover, it did take the precaution of bludgeoning an advance opinion letter from the IRS sanctioning the deal it had already made. But the operators putting up dimes on the tax shelter dollar in these takeovers don't know or care about the real estate business in general or mortgage banking in particular; they're simply sheltering earnings collected from elsewhere. They retain their freedom to dump their new acquisitions back on the doorstep of the FSLIC, in whatever shape they may be

when they have used up their tax shelter.

(2) *Interest Rates*: This consideration is the wildcard in the S&L crisis. One-third already broken went under when interest rates were significantly higher than they are now, and when the junk bonds into which high-cost deposits were invested were considerably safer. The higher interest rates go, the less able surviving S&Ls will be to pay for deposits—especially as junk bonds go bad.

(3) *FDIC*: It still enjoys "a surplus of funds" as you say, but it is more than committed by the contingent liabilities it has taken on to defray losses suffered by the operators with whom it has made deals. Commercial banks won't permit a merger between the FDIC and the FSLIC. Quite the contrary, the big bank chains that are earning feel an irresistible incentive to keep the FSLIC busted. They want to buy tax shelters on the cheap too.

(4) *Conversions of Thrifts to Commercial Banks*: That was one of the ways they got into trouble.

(5) *Bank Deregulation*: If the checkered history of banking in this country proves anything, it's that banking is too important a responsibility to be left to the bankers. Unregulated banking has always and will always precipitate financial crises.

ELIOT JANEWAY

Israel's disgrace

Winston-Salem, N.C.

To the Editors: In J. Bryan Hehir's article entitled "Zero-Plus Game" [January 27] he asks, "Where then are the voices of a positive-sum conception of the Middle East?" and states, "One place is within sectors of the American Jewish community." I was hoping that he would elaborate on that statement by specifically mentioning the efforts of the Jewish Committee on the Middle East which, for the past year, has been spearheading a group of prominent Jewish Americans who have come together to publicly express their strong desire to see the U.S. take meaningful steps to dissociate our country from the policies of Israel and to support mutual recognition between Israel and the new state of Palestine.

As an American Catholic of Irish descent I applaud and support the efforts of this growing group of rabbis, attorneys, and Jewish professors at over a hundred universities throughout the U.S. for their courageous stand. How can we continue to aid and abet Israel in its barbaric, illegal, and immoral conduct? Surely we will suffer for it. How, with the Holocaust still vivid in our minds, can we assist Israel in its frantic efforts to destroy the Palestinians? If Israel has learned

COMING

Catholic Education Issue

David O'Brien:

Sex & Love on Campus

nothing but to repeat the practices inflicted upon Jews, to pursue its hideous practices of genocidal destruction (with U.S. aid of a million dollars a day), our country should not be a blind and contributory partner in their disgraceful (and eventually futile) pursuit. The least we can do is to share the courage and foresight of organizations such as the Jewish Committee on the Middle East.

CARROLL C. ESTES

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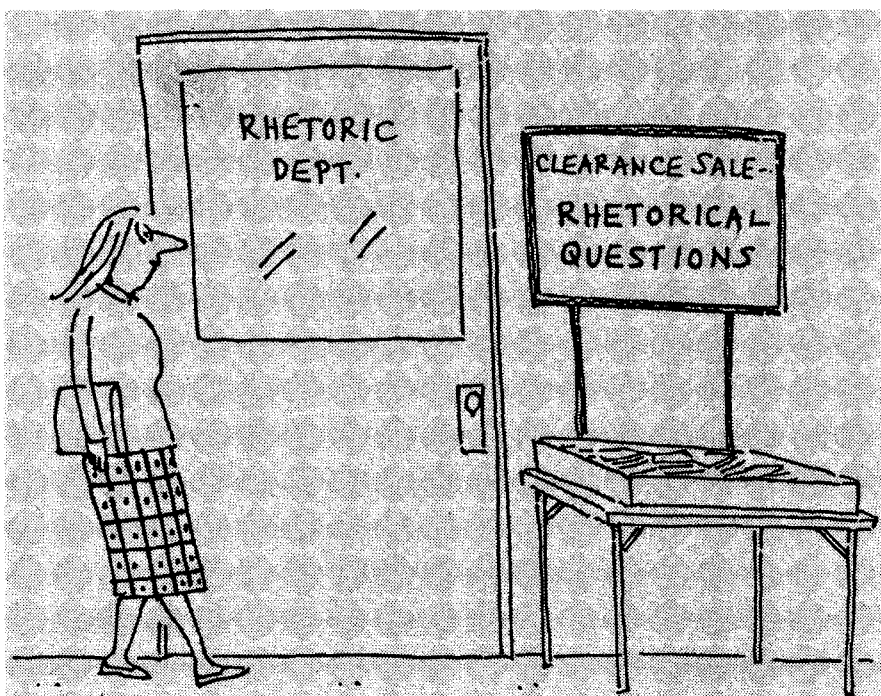
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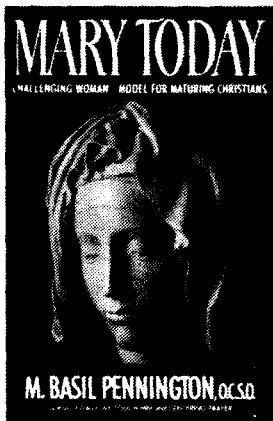
24th Biblical Institute, Trinity College, Burlington, Vt. 05401, June 18-23. Faculty: Joseph Agius (Rome), Kenneth Bailey (Jerusalem), Pheme Perkins, Rosemary Ruether. Write: Sister Miriam Ward.

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The National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic Clergy (NOCERCC) seeks a fulltime Executive Director beginning July 1, 1989. Employment requires Chicago residency. Salary, housing and benefits negotiable from \$25,000 to \$28,000 annually. Job description and application procedures available from NOCERCC's president, Rev. Harry S. Benjamin, 157 Lakeshore Drive, Grosse Pointe Farms, Mi. 48236-3794. Application deadline April 15, 1989.



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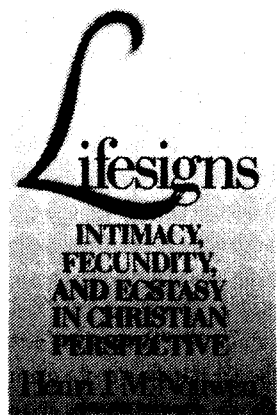


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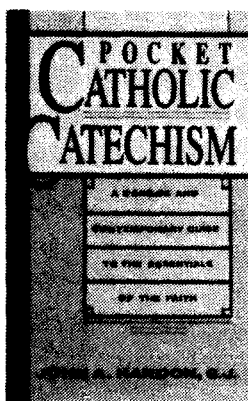
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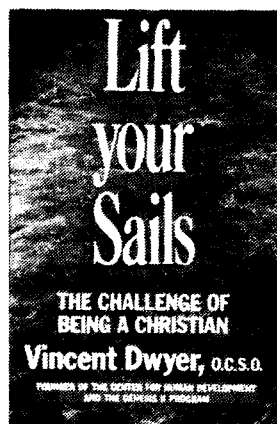


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